

RALPH H. RUEDY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: April 19, 2005

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Ruedy]

Q: Today is April 19, 2005; this is an interview with Ralph H. Ruedy. Middle initial N?

RUEDY: H.

Q: Ralph H. Ruedy. What does the H. stand for?

RUEDY: Herman.

Q: Herman. Ja, that's good Deutsch, echt Deutsch (real German).

RUEDY:

Q: OK, why don't we start at the beginning? When and where were you born?

RUEDY: I was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1943.

Q: Let's start on sort of the Ruedy side. Where did the Ruedys come from?

RUEDY: I'm originally from Switzerland. When I interviewed for the Foreign Service 10 these many years ago we were required to do a little biographical essay. I remember saying in my essay that perhaps it seemed strange that someone who grew up in a very small, rather isolated community in the Midwest speaking German should now be studying for a PhD. in English literature and applying to represent the United States abroad in the Foreign Service. But, that pretty much sums it up. The town that I grew up in is an interesting little community. It was actually established by German Pietists out of the German Baptist tradition, the Amana colonies in Iowa. As I say I grew up there speaking German, learned English in kindergarten and found the small town in Iowa in many ways very, very rewarding. There was also no doubt in my own mind that I wanted to go out and see a wider world.

Q: Well let's talk about...what do you know about your father's side of the family. Do you know where they came from or what they were involved in?

RUEDY: Yes they came from Getlingen in Schaffhausen, Switzerland and joined up with a Baptist or German Pietist group in the late 1700s, early 1800s. They then migrated as a group to the United States so it was a religious community to the United States in about 1840. They established a settlement first in upstate New York, the Ebenezer community. Now I think it is encompassed in the city of Buffalo. Later on, because the city was encroaching they emigrated again as a group to Iowa exactly 150 years ago. In fact, the Amana colonies are celebrating their sesquicentennial of 150 years in Iowa this year.

Q: Was your family...were they basically farmers or what?

RUEDY: No the predominant enterprise of the community was agriculture but also there was a tradition of textiles and crafts and things like that. They attempted to be a completely self-sufficient, self-sustaining community. My father actually trained as a wagon maker as a young man before he became an insurance agent and established an insurance agency. My grandfather was the storekeeper in the little town there so they existed very much as a self-contained religious community.

Q: Were they, was there any relationship to the Amish or not?

RUEDY: No, it comes out of the same religious tradition in Germany, the Mennonites and men who assign themselves as a contemporary I think of Martin Luther so that Anabaptist tradition goes way back to the beginning of the Reformation. They shared I think a lot of the same concerns, a lot of the same theologian quests but there was no formal connection at all. As a matter of fact, I think by their very nature these groups coalesced and split up and coalesced and split up. The Amish splitting off from the Mennonites and then the Church of Brethren in there somewhere and the Hutterites are in there somewhere and all of these various others. So anyway out of that general religious tradition.

Q: Now did your father...what sort of education did he have?

RUEDY: He had an eighth grade education.

Q: Now was German the language at home?

RUEDY: Yes.

Q: What sort of German was it?

RUEDY: An interesting German. It's a German dialect; actually it's an amalgamation of various regional dialects in Germany. There were a fair number of sects in this particular part of this group. My own ancestors were from the German speaking area of Switzerland, Schaffhausen, and people from the Rhine valley. So the dialect became an interesting amalgamation of regional dialects. When I served in Germany, I spent a good deal of my Foreign Service career in Germany East and West, and my German, people kept trying to figure out what regional accent it was. They couldn't quite place it. Some people thought maybe it sounded a little bit Bavarian. The Bavarians thought maybe it sounded a little bit Saxon. Some people said, "Oh yes, I hear the Swiss in there." So it was an interesting combination. They knew it didn't sound like an American accent or like an English accent to German but they couldn't place it regionally, South German generally.

Q: What about on your mother's side of the family? Where did they come from and how?

RUEDY: Oh they were from Saxony, Chemnitz, Karl-Marx-Stadt for a long time.

Q: Well now, was she part of the...

RUEDY: Yes.

Q: As part of the religious group?

RUEDY: Yes, yes, part of that same group.

Q: What about schooling for your mother?

RUEDY: Again an eighth grade education, which is what was done at that time.

Q: Oh yeah. Well then let's talk a bit about growing up in this, the town again is?

RUEDY: The Amana colony that is a long story. Let's not get too sidetracked and go way back.

Q: But in a way I'm trying to pick out some cultural things. Let's talk about it.

RUEDY: I understand.

Q: Tell me about it. Being young, I mean how did the...

RUEDY: It was a very close-knit community; people knew everybody's aunts and uncles, and brothers and sisters going back to generations. Rather isolated is not the word but unique. I think people thought of themselves as being part of a particular community with a particular cultural identity. There was the community and there was the outside, so there was that aspect of it. It was quite small and my high school graduating class I think we had 18. Very Iowa mid-west and all that.

Q: What about schooling? Was there sort of one-room schoolhouses or what was there?

RUEDY: No I think there were three or four rooms actually. There would be about 15-20 people something like that and a basic education. It was a public school obviously.

Q: Where did the teachers come from? Were they from the community?

RUEDY: Some were, some weren't. I remember the very dear kindergarten and first grade teachers that I had could not speak any German so there were these kids, not only me but a number of others, who really learned English in kindergarten. I don't recall that as being particularly traumatic, it seemed very natural. I don't recall this being something that "Oh my goodness now people are speaking English or whatever." It was not something that I feared and the English came naturally.

Q: How about your family? Do you have brothers or sisters?

RUEDY: Yes, I have two older brothers and a younger sister. All three of them are out in the Midwest, my sister and older brother are in Iowa and my other brother is in Minnesota, the Twin Cities.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time working on the farm or helping around or doing chores?

RUEDY: No, no, well helping chores around the house and stuff like that. It was just the natural thing to do at age fourteen, fifteen, sixteen to get a summer job. It took care of me during the school vacations and kept me out of mischief. So, yeah I worked in the sales room up the Widow Mill selling blankets and first of all sweeping floors and stocking shelves and things like that and then later also sales. I continued to do that even during college and school holidays when I was there.

Q: Well in school what particularly interested you?

RUEDY: I was very interested in reading. I guess I had a lively imagination and I was one of those kids who read a lot. I had kind of a two-track existence. On the one hand books, novels, things like that were very important to me so there was a very lively interior life. On the other hand, I was also pretty outgoing and social, got along with my friends, was a class officer in high school and school paper and boy scouts.

Q: Can you recall any author of books that particularly intrigued you at the time?

RUEDY: I remember reading a lot of Hemingway, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio and identifying very much with the small town and wanting to get out of the Midwest. I remember reading a lot of Sinclair Lewis and again identifying very much with Sinclair Lewis and getting out of the small towns. I remember some of the Hemingway short stories and the Hemingway novels that I reacted to very strongly and I vividly remember I had a very good high school English teacher. I remember when news came that Hemingway was dead in Idaho, he had committed suicide in Idaho, this affected me. Nobody else was interested in that and that was not something that was on people's scope but I remember tears streaming down the face of my English teacher and thinking well, she understands.

Q: How important was the church in your life?

RUEDY: Pretty important. I was confirmed in the Amana Church and I think the religious dimension, the spiritual dimension was important to me and still is. I am a member now of the Presbyterian Church in Fairfax. We've been members there for the last, oh, twenty years since we first moved back to Washington in the first Washington assignment. We are in the process of getting ready to move to Stanton, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley. There I have been attending, Trinity Episcopal Church which was established in 1742 and which is very high church Anglican or high church Episcopalian. That also is important to me, Tiffany stained glass windows, a wonderful pipe organ, Palestrina from the choir on this last Sunday.

Q: Well I was wondering whether in your town one always thinks of the preacher dominating and pointing his finger at little children and thou shalt not do this or that?

RUEDY: No, no, that really wasn't the factor. For me the Pietist tradition and moving toward the association with the spiritual or identifying you know moving towards the spiritual and toward God. That was very much a personal quest and there wasn't a whole lot of 'well this was right way and this was the wrong way.' I never felt that kind of pressure, the kind of thing that one associates with the old time religion and Protestant...

Q: It was not the "hell fire and damnation"?

RUEDY: No, no, no not at all.

Q: How about at home? As you grew up through high school were you sort of plugged in to what was happening around the world and all or not?

RUEDY: Yes I was very interested in that. I was born in 1943 and I remember watching the Army-McCarthy hearings on television and being fascinated by that. I remember watching the political campaigns and being fascinated. Television in the 1950s I think was a very different kind of thing than what we have now and television did some very good things. I remember public affairs broadcasting Edward R. Murrow See It Now and for me that was really a connection to a wider world. I remember some of the drama productions that were going on. I remember I didn't know who she was but found out only later that Gisela May, the wonderful interpreter of Brecht music was on one of these cultural Sunday morning programs and I thought that was just fabulous. I remember seeing, again not knowing what it was, Mozart's Don Giovanni and you know really wow. Here it was not the kind of thing that I would get in every day life but there it was on television sometimes. I really, as I say, I really plugged into that. That was important to me.

Sinclair Lewis, I got into that by a particularly good dramatization of Arrowsmith that I remember seeing on one of these Westinghouse Presents or whatever it was.

Q: These were modern shows...

RUEDY: They were.

Q: Which were extremely well done.

RUEDY: Yes they were.

Q: How about you mentioned music. Did you study music?

RUEDY: No not at all. I am completely tone deaf. I like music, I like listening to music but singing or playing an instrument is as out of reach as algebra or the moon. This is not within my reach.

Q: I'm with you. What about politics? Where did the family fall in those days?

RUEDY: Democratic, my dad was for a while a local democratic committeeman. It was sort of post-Roosevelt, New Deal, Harry Truman kind of thing I would say.

Q: You mentioned that when you were in high school in all you knew you wanted to get the hell, I won't say get the hell out, but to get out which, of course, is sort of the archetypal American story. Did you have any idea of what you wanted to do?

RUEDY: No not really. I thought vaguely for a while that I wanted to be a teacher. When it came time to go off to college I knew that I did want to go and in fact both of my brothers and my sister are college graduates. College, even though it wasn't something that was self evident from the standpoint of my parents' education necessarily, it seemed to be something that we wanted to do. So for me there wasn't a whole lot of agonizing of filling out a lot of forms. It was either you were going to the University of Iowa, which was an excellent school about twenty miles down the road, or Iowa State University which was a hundred miles away. I laughed and said I wanted to go far from home so went to Iowa State. Both of my older brothers went to Iowa State so that also I think influenced my decision.

I went to Iowa State. At that point at a land grant college ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) was still required for males attending a land grant college. Anyway then the application said to check the box marked Army, Navy or Air Force, which ROTC do you want to be part of? I guess for me Navy sounded most exotic so I checked the box marked Navy and my brother kind of indicated that that might be good too because he had some contact with it. I went off to Iowa State and discovered after I got on campus that one could actually get a scholarship for Navy ROTC and got a ROTC scholarship then which paid my way through school which was real important to me. Then, of course, there was a four year obligation in the Navy afterward. I graduated in 1965 and was commissioned and upon graduation enlisted in the United States Navy and off I went.

Q: Well let's talk about Iowa State. What were you majoring in there?

RUEDY: I was a history major. It had a very good history department and a good English department too. I took some good, good courses from excellent professors. We were almost a little liberal arts enclave for the engineers and scientists.

Q: How about your parents? How much of a roll did they have in getting you to go on to further your education and all that?

RUEDY: Oh that is hard to say. I think they encouraged it but I think at that point I thought well you know these decisions are decisions that are really ones that I'm going to have to make if I can. So, I guess they weren't looking over my shoulder very much so I didn't really look to them very much I don't think for guidance and advice in that regard. They were interested but I was kind of on my own.

Q: What was Iowa State like in the early '60s?

RUEDY: It was very conservative. I joined a fraternity, social fraternity. Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday we dressed for dinner which meant a suit and tie and you threw on your coat and tie five minutes before dinner and dressed like that but we did that. The sororities and the girls' dormitories had hours and they had to be in by midnight or one, or whatever, and it was very conservative. I graduated in, as I say, 1965, went off into the Navy and spent most of the next five years abroad. I arrived on the Duke campus then for graduate school in January, 1970 and it was like an Alice in Wonderland. Hopefully it was not the campus, this is not the college life that I remembered.

Q: What about the Navy? Did you have a specialty?

RUEDY: No. I went in as a ship driver, an eleven hundred surface line officer, and did a tour aboard a destroyer, the USS Joseph P. Kennedy. I put in for a ship that sort of guaranteed that I was going to go off to sea duty, that was a given. I put in for a destroyer or small combatant based in New England because I always thought New England would be kind of interesting to see and was assigned to the Kennedy in Newport, Rhode Island. The Kennedy, I tell people that the wonderful ship of the line, the proud ship of the line in which I served as an officer is now in a Naval museum. It was one of the few World War II destroyers that was not ground up for razor blades or whatever. It was preserved because of the Kennedy name and is now in Fall River, Massachusetts, along with the battleship the USS Massachusetts, a submarine and a couple of other ships, a little complex of Navy museums. So the Kennedy still exists and I spent close to two years on board as communications officer.

Q: What were you doing? Was sort of duty was the Kennedy doing?

RUEDY: We were straight destroyers so we served a lot with aircraft carriers and task forces. I came on board the ship just as it was coming out of the Navy yard in Boston, Massachusetts, and spent a couple of weeks in Boston and then we went to Newport and then down to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for refresher training. It was pretty rigorous getting the ship into shape again after the period in the repair yards. Then we did a tour in the Mediterranean with the Sixth Fleet working mostly with the attack carriers as part of the attack carrier task forces all in the Cold War stuff, with Soviet destroyers, you know, two miles away and so on. We did a couple of cruises way out in the mid-Atlantic toward the south Atlantic as stocking vessels as Gemini launches so if they had to go to a landing, overshot a primary landing site you were supposed to be out there in the middle of nowhere to team up and pick them up. It was some interesting stuff.

Q: How did you like the Navy?

RUEDY: One is not supposed to like the Navy and we complained a lot as junior officers do; but I feel it was a liberating experience for me because I think it opened up a wider world. Here were guys from hotshot universities and the Naval Academy and one thing or another and I was from a small town in Iowa state and I thought, "Gee, I can do this." For me it was a good experience, very good, and I still keep contacts with people that I knew on board the Kennedy because it was a very tense and really a unique experience.

Q: This is several years after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Were you feeling that war could start at any time?

RUEDY: No, not in the sense of the Cuban Missile Crisis but we were up there and it was for real. As communications officer I was involved in the authentications systems for nuclear weapons, which the ship was capable of carrying. We had an ASROC (Anti-Submarine ROCKET) system, anti-submarine system, and the official line on that was that it was capable of launching a nuclear depth charge. Whether or not they were on board at any given time was a deep dark secret but the capability was there and that involved the whole communications rigmaroles and, oh, this was for real. When I looked out at the Russian trawler a mile away in the Mediterranean in the middle of our carrier task force you thought, well, you know this is for real.

Q: But when you were in the Mediterranean I take it you, the Sixth Fleet was always putting into ports weren't they?

RUEDY: Not enough.

Q: I mean how did this taste of the world suit you?

RUEDY: Very much, very much. That I found just really riveting and fascinating. I enjoyed the port visits. Between my junior and senior year of college I did a Mediterranean training cruise as part of the ROTC program. I was fortunate enough, to get a cruise in the Mediterranean. So I served as a midshipman first class for six weeks aboard the USS Bainbridge, which was a brand new nuclear destroyer. A nuclear-powered frigate. There were a number of port visits and after that we had the wonderful opportunity of traveling around Europe for a while. There were about three weeks when I could travel around with some friends and that was incredible, that was great, that was just a wonderful, wonderful experience.

Q: Did you consider while you were in the Navy of making it a career?

RUEDY: Not really. I think if I could go around a couple or two or three more times in life then maybe a Naval career is one that I would do; but, no, when it came time to get out of the Navy I knew that I was kind of torn between law school and graduate school in English literature. I had been a history major as an undergraduate and had some really good literature courses during my junior and senior year and decided that I would try English literature. I was on the Kennedy for about a year and a half, after that I was assigned to Vietnam. I would not have volunteered for Vietnam, they couldn't have paid me enough to do that. But when I got orders to Vietnam I thought, "Well, what the hell, this is what's going on in the world." I almost felt like, "Well, no, might as well if that is what is going on, that is what I will do."

Q: Where were you in Vietnam?

RUEDY: I had a great job. I was assigned to the intelligence staff of Naval Forces Headquarters in Saigon. We had Navy liaison officers up and down the coast and through the Mekong Delta and part of my job was to work with these Naval intelligence liaison officers. So I had a big stack of travel orders that basically said let this guy on any airplane or ship to travel to wherever he feels he needs to go. I traveled around quite a lot through Vietnam through the coastal areas of I CORPS and II CORPS and then in the coast in through the Mekong Delta where Naval operating forces were.

Q: What was your impression of our presence in Vietnam?

RUEDY: Wow, that was interesting. When I went there was still a lot of idealism. I came out of this whole John F. Kennedy, bear any burden and all this stuff. I was very enthusiastic about that and the anti-war movement really hadn't gotten started at all when I got orders to Vietnam. Even out in California when I was training to go over and we were still I think filled with a lot of idealism and we were reading the, what was it, Bernard Fall and doing all...

Q: Street Without Joy.

RUEDY: Street Without Joy, exactly, exactly, yes, yes. So I think we went over with still lots of idealism and this was part of the whole engagement with communism and protecting this small country from blah, blah, blah. When I got over there, I think my experience was mirrored by a lot of others who had thought, "Oh man, this does not compute, this just does not fit, this isn't working." It was a period, I won't say I went through a lot of soul searching, or agonizing as some others did, but I knew that it wasn't what it was cracked up to be and it wasn't working. I was over there through the Tet offensive in Saigon. Afterwards man you were coming up with contingency plans to do this, that and the other, increase the American military presence, more Navy forces where would you put them, what would they do? Then it all kind of fizzled very quickly within a period of a couple of weeks. I remember it was not long before I left Saigon I remember listening at the Navy headquarters. A couple of us were there in the office listening to Armed Forces Radio and Television and President Johnson's speech at nine o'clock at night in DC and it was nine o'clock in the morning in Saigon. He indicated that he would not run for reelection and the peace talks would begin again. There was a gut feeling by a lot of us that we are out of here on the best terms that we can get but we are out of here. This is a lost cause and we are going to turn it over on the best terms we can get but our time here is over and this war is not going to be won.

Q: Tell me about your experiences during Tet.

RUEDY: I was based in Cholon, I was living at a BOQ (Bachelor's Officers Quarters) in Cholon which was about a mile and a half from the office in Saigon, right downtown in Saigon not far from the Embassy. Initially on the morning of Tet it was hard to know what was going on. There were a lot of fireworks and it was the Tet holiday after all so we were expecting lots of fireworks but then we began thinking, man, this is not fireworks, this is machineguns. The pattern didn't sound like fireworks and it clearly wasn't, but there was no fighting in Cholon where we were particularly. The fighting was going on in Saigon around the Embassy and lots of other places downtown, but in Cholon it was all pretty quiet. I mean everything was on edge and stuff like that, you didn't know what was going to happen. On the first day we did not try to make it into the office, we were told not to come because there was nothing we could do. Just lie low and stay in place. We didn't go in the second day, I think I forget but pretty soon we needed to get into headquarters. So we went in a jeep, but we never got shot at as far as I know of. I remember there was one hotshot major who was staying in the BOQ who told me, "Man you're going in, this is stupid." He went in the next day to his headquarters at MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) and took a road that I would not have taken. Their jeep was hit by machinegun fire and all four of them in the jeep were killed. I came in that night to the BOQ and they were cleaning out his locker and putting it into a duffle bag and sending it home, so you never knew.

Q: Who was the Commander of Naval Forces when you were in there, do you remember?

RUEDY: Oh, let's see, I forget who the Admiral was, it was a two star admiral but later on it was...

Q: Zumwalt.

RUEDY: Zumwalt came later on. I was not there when Zumwalt was there.

Q: I dealt with him very briefly. Did you get any feel for our riverine operations while you were doing this?

RUEDY: Yeah, we worked with attack force 117 which was based on an LST (Landing Ship Tank) in the Delta and they had these big converted LCMs (Landing Craft, Medium). They ferried boats up and down canals and they were working with an army of light infantry brigades as I recall. I worked pretty closely with the Intel guys because they were looking for aerial photography to figure out what canals they could go through and what they couldn't and figure out the depth of water and stuff. I remember thinking at the time, geeze this is sort of nuts because these guys get into their boats and they have this hell of a planking and they go and if somebody wants to shoot at them they can. If they don't want to shoot at them, they just melt back into the reeds and nobody every knows they are there. So it did not strike me as a terribly smart way to fight the war because doing a big sweep like I say, it was kind of engaging on the VC's (Viet Cong) terms. Down in the delta it was pretty much all Viet Cong and there wasn't much North Vietnamese army activity down there.

Q: You left in '68, were you getting reflections from home or with your own colleagues about the war protests or anything like that? Were you aware of the depth of unhappiness?

RUEDY: I became aware of that and all of this was a kind of surreal among young Navy officers who were sort of wise guys and stuff like that but I remember we did an Intel brief when all of the violence was going on in Washington, DC. We sort of put the Intel brief into the kind of cliché context of engaging the bad guys and this, that and the other and then we were talking about the situation in DC. So yeah, we became aware of it. I finished reading the biography of Kerry.

Q: This is John Kerry.

RUEDY: Yes, Tour of Duty, talking about his Vietnam experience and he was there a little bit later than I was. I think he got there at about the time I was leaving and did some of the same things though like riding the boats around and the training in San Diego so a lot of that is very familiar. Kerry obviously became very politicized and then came back and was really interested in getting involved in anti-war activities. I didn't. When I left Vietnam I still had some time to go on my Navy tour, my four years of obligated service and they were giving people out of Vietnam pretty much instead your choice of duty. I knew at that point I didn't want to make the Navy a career so I was interested in being a department head of a destroyer so I put in for shore duty in continental Europe and got assigned to Naples, Italy. I was in Naples, Italy, for my last year in the Navy and enjoyed Italy. That was most of '69.

Q: What were you doing in Naples?

RUEDY: I was with the Naval Support activity, which supported the operating units in the Sixth Fleet. It was 9-5 and there was no BOQs, I had an apartment in Posillipo overlooking the Bay of Naples. It was a very different kind of life from the way I had been viewing it before.

Q: By this time, I can't remember, were you engaged? Married? Or anything like that?

RUEDY: No. I was single and then left Italy in let's see December of 1969, sort of a symmetry there, the end of the 1960s and I had with my Navy savings, most of it I was saving for graduate school because I knew I wanted to go on to grad school at that point. I had applied to a number of graduate schools and was interested still in the big cities in the Northeast. I had been accepted to Boston University in the English department so I was very excited at the prospect of starting at Boston University. Then, after my four years of obligated service, I should say it was going to expire four years after graduation in June of '69 and I was going to start at Boston in September of '69. Then it turned out that the Navy involuntarily extended all officers in my year group or whatever, they were still trying to figure out what was happening in Vietnam. So anyway that meant that I could not start graduate school in September, I was going to have to stay in the Navy. Initially the extension was going to be for a year, then they cut the extension to six months which meant I would be getting out in December instead of June and I could not start the Boston University program in January, the beginning of the spring semester. But Duke where I had also been accepted they let me start the program at the beginning of the semester, so I decided that I wouldn't go to Boston University but I would go to Duke instead. I left Naples in early December of '69. I had bought with my savings a Fiat Sports Spider back in '69 which I could ship, cost free, space available on military ships and there weren't many going out of the Mediterranean. I was told that if you took it to Bremerhaven, Germany, they have these things going back and forth all the time to Bayonne, New Jersey. So I got into my Fiat Sports Spider and drove it to Bremerhaven, Germany, dropped it off there and spent a couple more weeks in Paris, London and Amsterdam. I then flew back to the United States, spent Christmas with my parents, my family in Iowa and then flew out to Bayonne, New Jersey, picked up my Fiat Sports Spider convertible and headed south on I-95 (Interstate 95) to who knows what would await me in graduate school at Duke in North Carolina.

Q: So you went to graduate school in Duke from what 1970 to?

RUEDY: I started in January of '70 and was in the middle of my dissertation in '74 when I took the Foreign Service exam. At the time assistant professorships were very, very few and far between. The job market had suddenly contracted drastically.

Q: Absolutely.

RUEDY: And everybody was looking, gee what else can I do with a degree in English Lit? I don't know why, I guess I vaguely remembered the Foreign Service. My wife and I had also talked about it and both of us were interested in living abroad. I met Shirley, my first semester in graduate school and we were married the following summer. I think both of us were kind of intrigued with the idea of living abroad so I took the Foreign Service exam. It was free and I didn't have anything else going on that Saturday and went to the Durham post office and one thing lead to another and came into the Foreign Service to USIA (U.S. Information Agency) since my background was in more cultural side I figured that's where I would be most at home or had the most to offer.

Q: Had you during your time in college, the Navy, had any contact or interest in the Foreign Service?

RUEDY: Not as such. I really didn't know that much about it. In Naples I do remember going once to a program at the American Cultural Center and I don't know what got me there and I don't really remember that much about it, I think it was a lecture on T.S. Elliott, or an American poet, I forget, but I got up to that cultural center which I think has since been closed, I know it's been closed, and thought man, this is not bad, it is kind of an interesting thing to do. In graduate school also I had applied for a Fulbright junior lectureship, as something to do since as I say assistant professorships were few and far between, so that kind of oriented me in that direction.

Q: Did you get a Fulbright?

RUEDY: No, I think that I was still in the process when the whole Foreign Service thing was developing, I forget how that worked. I'm not even sure that I sent in my application but I was interested in it.

Q: What was your dissertation going to be?

RUEDY: It was, I did finish it later on and got the degree. I was in the middle of it when they called and asked if I would be interested in accepting the appointment to the Foreign Service. This would have been in late '73 and by that time I had done my prelims and I was well into dissertation research and was really beginning to write. At that point I asked whether it would be possible to delay coming into the Foreign Service six months until after I had finished my dissertation. "Well, you know we have enough money this fiscal year to accept the class of so many and your name now is at the head of the rank order and next year we don't know how much money we will have or even whether we will even have an entering class and we will have new people in the rank order." None of that meant much to me but the bottom line was if you are interested in the Foreign Service, we would advise you to come in now, which I did.

I then took a leave of absence after my first Foreign Service tour and went back to finish up my dissertation, which was on Ford Madox Ford in The English Review which was a literary magazine published in London in 1908, 1909. It involved lots of people some, of whom were already famous, many of whom became famous later on. Ford Madox Ford was the editor, he was working closely with H.G. Wells, he was a young novelist at the time. He discovered the poetry of D.H. Lawrence who was doing teaching in the English midlands and his girlfriend sent off poetry to The English Review and they said bring him to London. Ezra Pound had just appeared on the scene in London and he was involved. Henry James who was an established novelist and a serious figure obviously contributed a couple of excellent short stories. Joseph Conrad also by that time was a major figure did some important work for The English Review so it brought together a lot of people. It got them all mad at one another, which was interesting too.

Q: Do you recall when you took the oral exam; do you recall any of the questions?

RUEDY: Not really, no. If I remember the preliminary exam was pretty rough. There they were really trying I think to make sure that you were ready to move on to a dissertation. The dissertation defense I mean by that time you had done the dissertation and your doctoral dissertation adviser had been working with you and I think there, it was just sort of assumed that if this dissertation could not be defended you'd never get to the defense. So the defense was more congenial.

Q: When you were applying for the Foreign Service where did you take it?

RUEDY: At the Durham, North Carolina, post office. I do remember this is a story that I've told a couple of times. There was an English professor, a good, good guy who was my Shakespeare professor ran into me as I was carrying my doctoral notes on dissertation stuff out of the library and getting ready for the big move to Washington, DC. He was as I say an interesting, congenial fellow and he looked at me and he thought I had some promise in an academic career and he looked over his glasses at me as I was carrying out my boxes of dissertation notes at the back steps of the Perkins Library and said, "Mr. Ruedy I understand you are going to be leaving us. Tell me all about this decision that you have made." I explained about the Foreign Service, having taken the Foreign Service exam and now going to Washington to begin a year of diplomatic service. Then he looked again over his glasses and kind of peered down at me and said, "And Mr. Ruedy is this the sort of thing for which you wish to be congratulated?" I don't know how I reacted, I know later on I wish I would have said, "Well I'm not sure that I should be congratulated but wish me luck."

Q: Well tell me a bit about, I realize as a grad student you lived a life apart from campus life but what was, how did you find Duke during those four years in the '70s?

RUEDY: In retrospect, of course, knowing how things came out, that I would pass and the dissertation, which I had written, and stuff like that it seems a lot more tranquil than maybe it was. There is a great deal of stress in graduate school and here I was coming out of Iowa State and four years completely away from an academic environment stepping into a fairly high-powered graduate program like the one at Duke and wondering am I in the right place? Am I going to make it? Is this really what I am cut out to do? So, yeah, a certain amount of apprehension and in graduate school it is a total immersion experience, there's no getting around it, everybody that I knew really had to plug at it. There were no freebies.

Q: This is at the height of a lot of unrest.

RUEDY: Of yes.

Q: Was that going on at the Duke campus?

RUEDY: Very much so, very much so. There were takeovers of the main administration building; there were bonfires in the traffic circle and all that kind of stuff. As a graduate student I was relatively aloof from that I think I didn't participate in it. Some graduate students did, I didn't. I was still interestingly enough getting money doing maybereserve duty so I would put on my Navy uniform once a week and drive to Raleigh, North Carolina, and do my little Navy reserve. That was good money and I would put on my black Navy raincoat over my dress whites and get into my car. But it was not something I talked a lot about, it hadn't bothered me particularly, certainly I was never hassled at all. There were a few people who knew that I was in the Navy reserve and nobody every hassled me about it, it was no big deal.

I did later on some of the protests were still going on when I was doing teaching as an assistantship. I was teaching some freshman literature courses, a course in a novel and I remember one semester when I forget what was going on. It was at the closing stages of the war when there was still a lot of controversy and I substituted that wonderful book by Graham Greene *The Quiet American* for whatever had been on my reading list. *The Quiet American* I think is a wonderful, wonderful book and it sums up the idealism and ambiguity and the very tough moral choices. The movie was awful but I think the book was just tremendous. It really I thought is still the best thing that I read on Vietnam and I was interested in how the students would respond to it and they didn't really respond to it very much. Their minds were kind of made up and this one student she wrote 'moral ambiguity, what the hell is this about. War is wrong and we should get out and stop the bombing and they're killing babies.' It was kind of disappointing. These were bright kids.

Q: When you came to Washington you started the Foreign Service in '74?

RUEDY: January of '74. That is correct.

Q: How was your basic officer course? Can you talk a little bit about the people in it and how it was taught?

RUEDY: Yes, I came into USIA and there were six of us who came into USIA with that intern class. We had some courses at USIA headquarters, which at the time was on 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue just down the street from the White House. Most of what we did was done in conjunction with our State Department colleagues in the A-100 class at the Foreign Service Institute at the time in Rosslyn, one of those awful Rosslyn high-rises. It was an interesting time because it was the Watergate hearings and there were demonstrations at the White House and Lafayette Park so during the lunch hour I could walk down and watch the demonstrations and see this whole thing building and all that.

Q: How big was your class and what was the composition of it?

RUEDY: In our group coming into USIA we were an interesting group and we went off in different directions. There were two, three women, were there three women or two women, I have forgotten now and two black guys and an Asian guy and different backgrounds, interesting backgrounds. They were bright people. I liked them, people coming from different directions, different parts of the country, different experiences. The State people that we worked with I think at that point oh how many were there, probably 25 or 30 I forget exactly I think maybe a third of them were women so there were a fair number of women officers that were coming into the State Department at that point as well. They all felt I think that they were doing something new and different and unique and they were because I don't think it was really too far back that those career options weren't available.

Q: No, no I mean just years before if you were a woman and got married you had to get out.

RUEDY: Yes. Ambassador Thomas Pickering's wife was in that category. She said she was with USIA and then met Ambassador Pickering. They were married and that was the end of her Foreign Service career. She told me that she had done Fourth of July receptions as the Ambassador's wife in, I don't know, twenty times, fifteen times. He served such a long and distinguished and wonderful career and she was very much a part of that. But yeah, when woman married that was the end of their career.

Q: When you were getting the USIA training and all was there sort of a dividing line and all about whether you would go into sort of the press field or the cultural field or what have you?

RUEDY: A little bit but not much. The first assignment was sort of information and cultural anyway so I didn't worry too much about that at the time. My initial assignment, USIA had a wonderful program at the time, which unfortunately went by the board. I think it was a best practices thing where you were actually sent as a junior officer trainee. You were an extra officer at a post and you rotated through different embassy sections so I did a stint on my first assignment in Tehran as a political officer for a month and that was interesting.

Q: You were there from '70-? In Tehran, Iran from when to when?

RUEDY: Well let's see I would have gotten there in the fall of '74 and would have been there until the summer of '76 I believe.

Q: So what was Iran like? How did it strike you when you got there?

RUEDY: It reminded me in some ways of Vietnam. There was this sort of mental construct of what was happening in the country. When I went the Shah had been on the cover of Time and Newsweek and Iran was moving to become a European power within a generation or within a few decades. The oil money was pouring in and there was modernization and women were entering the mainstream and there was lots of stuff that was out there and then when you got there and looked around you thought this doesn't compute. This is a little like the Vietnam experience where when you got there you thought, Jesus, this is just not working out the way I learned back in DC. I had very much that same feeling in Iran thinking that this is not coming out the way my Time and Newsweek story said it was.

Q: How did you find the first, the political section? What did they give you to do?

RUEDY: I did an interesting report on student unrest. There was an annual student holiday the 15th of Azar and this was, according to the Persian calendar, a date for great demonstrations and an anti-government, often violence and smashing of windows and so on. So I set out to find out what the hell the 15th of Azar was all about. It was interesting because the more you got into it the more it sort of disappeared into the myths of history. There were concerns that at some point there had been a shooting by the Shah's policemen of students on the Tehran University campus, but exactly where and when they got shot was impossible to exactly...but as I say it kind of dissipated. You couldn't really put your finger on it but everybody knew the 15th of Azar was a big deal and there would be violence on campus and it would be anti-government and there would be windows smashed and there might be some shooting and God knows it would be awful but nobody ever could figure out exactly what the specific historical basis was for this particular event. It was very Persian, a kind of the more you got into it the more difficult it was to exactly define what you were dealing with.

Q: What did you do? Did you go out in the campus or could you?

RUEDY: Not much. I did a bunch of interviews and things like that. Shirley had a much more interesting time of it there because she was a faculty member of Tehran National University and she may have talked about that. You talk to faculty members and you talk to some students but not many and you know more faculty and sort of westernized Iranians and it was a lot of stuff going on. I was there for just 18 months as a junior officer trainee and we had a wonderful old gentleman who was a senior cultural adviser with USIS (U.S. Information Service). He was French educated from an old family, very plugged in and really knew Persian society and could quote you Ferdowsi and Hafiz. He was really just a wonderful, wonderful guy. Very plugged into the politics as well. He invited Shirley and me to a wonderful Persian lunch the last week that we were there and it was a long lunch and great Persian hospitality and it was just very cultural, it was just a wonderful experience. He began talking about how things were going in Iran. He said that he feared that the day was coming when in Tehran no American would be safe and at the time that seemed like a very weird...we knew things weren't going well but that seemed like a very far out prediction. Of course, he was absolutely right on within a number of years.

Q: While you were there were you picking up some...in a large embassy there is always sort of an establishment the ambassador and heads of section and all of that, more senior officers. The junior officers often have quite a different attitude towards things and a little bit iconoclastic and all. Did you get the feeling from your fellow junior officers that we were maybe too close to the Shah or snuggling up to him or not?

RUEDY: Yeah, I think so. There were some good people over there. I remember Henry Kreist who later on you know was much involved in the hostage crisis, a great guy, he was in the political section. I remember I worked immediately with Stan Escudero who later on went to be ambassador in a number of countries, a fluent Persian speaker. I was doing my little paper on the 15th of Azar for Stan who was at that point a second or third tour political officer. I think all of us figured things weren't going well but he didn't really know, I didn't know, in what direction it was going to go. I think that most of our contacts were with more Western oriented liberal types who I think envisioned a far different future for Iran than the one that actually transpired. In looking back on it I think there were lots and lots of groups jockeying for power. I think the one thing they all had in common was we've got to get rid of the Shah and when we get rid of the Shah we will make our move and we will establish the kind of thing that we want to establish. That applied certainly to these western oriental liberal types who were more interested in a western social democracy kind of thing. It applied I think to the more traditional merchant class, the Bazaaries they were called, who were more interested in no, not this much of a military hardware and more of a traditional Persian society. It applied probably to the communists and they were certainly around the Tudeh party was in the background you know very much a factor. It applied obviously to the religious fundamentalists and they weren't on our scope as much and they certainly weren't on my scope very much and they were the ones who of course outmaneuvered them all. I think the hostage crisis was obviously part of that. By the time the crisis was over Khomeini was firmly in charge and his people who were involved in the churning immediately after the revolution, the Bazargans, the Ghotbzadehs and various others were dead or were in Paris or wherever. So the hostage crisis was kind of outmaneuvering all those people in establishing this new situation.

Q: You left there in what was it '76 or '75?

RUEDY: When was it? It would have been '76 I guess it was.

Q: What other sections did you work in?

RUEDY: I worked in the consular section for a while and that was an education. That was important to me because I did visa work for about a month and a half on student visas. Later on working as a USIA officer on student issues and stuff, I mean the whole study abroad business and you know how people got interested in studying in the United States doing those interviews on the visa line that was important to have had that experience.

I spent a month, too, working in the economic section and there oil was obviously the thing. It was good training that I benefited from a lot in my later career with USIA. It was a good program. I'm sorry State did not adopt that.

Q: Did you get involved in USIA work?

RUEDY: Yes, very much so. I did my embassy rotation which was about four months altogether and then I was an information officer type, assistant information officer type, at USIS in Tehran and worked with some wonderful people. People who were really, really sharp and went on to make great careers, were themselves second and third tour officers at the time and formed friendships that I continue to value. I haven't seen much of them lately but you know you run into them and everybody in the Foreign Service is familiar with this, somebody you haven't seen in years and then an elevator door suddenly opens and here you are and you pick up as if you never left it.

Q: What sort of work did you get involved in on the information side?

RUEDY: We had a film program going on at the time and we were involved in that. We were doing press summaries, press releases, summaries of the daily press which I would audit, edit, and send back to Washington. Also involved with the cultural center. We had a big cultural center in Tehran, a big English language program and many, many, many students that studied English at the American cultural center. That was right down by the university. If there was a demonstration at the embassy, classes would go right on at the cultural center and it was interesting. The cultural center was a major thing in Tehran. We had done big art exhibits. I remember we had a big exhibit of Paul Strand the photographer. Louise Nevelson came over and did a lecture and stayed for her opening. We had wonderful exhibits by Louise Nevelson; that was before she became rich and famous I guess, but anyway good, good stuff that was going on there. A film night that they did, I think they showed films three or four nights a week in packed auditoriums, it was very much a presence on the scene. A good thing I think, a good thing.

Q: Did you have many contacts with Iranians?

RUEDY: Yeah, quite a few. I got to know a number of people especially younger faculty members in the English department. Some of Shirley's colleagues from the university became mutual friends.

Q: Well then you left there when? Say in '76?

RUEDY: I left there in '75 and then I did a six month leave of absence to go back and finish up my dissertation. I left Tehran and at that point I had orders to Kabul, Afghanistan. People were telling me what a wonderful assignment I had in Kabul and for a second tour officer to be assigned as center director in Kabul, Afghanistan, was a wonderful, wonderful thing and a real coup and I would love it. I gave them to understand in personnel that while this was interesting I nevertheless really would be interested in possibly serving in Germany, Europe, and went off to do my leave without pay at Duke to finish up my doctoral dissertation.

I had a six months leave of absence and I was told, in the summer of '76 that definitely I could not plan on any additional time. Six months was all I had, then I would need to go on to my next assignment. OK that was part of the deal and I went and got settled in Durham and was beginning to do my writing on the dissertation. Suddenly the telephone rang and the people at USIA personnel were suddenly on the phone asking if perhaps I would be interested in having my assignment to Kabul cancelled and being assigned to a new position which had been established at the American embassy to the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin. They needed somebody on fairly short notice and I already had German. And I should recognize that if I took this assignment it absolutely meant finishing and going out to post in December. I said, "OK, if that is part of the deal I would love to go to East Berlin." So I finished up my dissertation, felt under a great deal of pressure to grind it out and to finish it up but I did and I went off to East Berlin then in January 1977.

Q: You were in East Berlin from '77 until when?

RUEDY: Until '80. It was a two-year assignment and I extended for a third year so I was actually there for almost three and a half years to get into the summer cycle. I got there in January I guess it was and left in the summer of 1980.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

RUEDY: David Bolen. Yeah, I think that was who it was; he was there the entire time that I was there. I don't think he had arrived yet when I arrived. The previous ambassador who was, oh what was the guys' name?

Q: John Sherman Cooper?

RUEDY: Exactly. John Sherman Cooper had left. He was much beloved and he was an older statesman type out of the political sphere and he had opened the embassy, had been the first ambassador and then David Bolen who was a career Foreign Service type came into it and he was there as ambassador. He hadn't served in Europe very much, I don't think at all maybe as a junior officer and most of his career I think had been in Africa and here he was in East Berlin.

Q: How were relations with East Germany when you arrived there?

RUEDY: Pretty tough. The East Germans, well it was all post-Helsinki and it was all very complicated. I think some wonderful imaginative diplomacy had gone in to the Helsinki Agreement and then the Berlin Four Power Agreement and the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, which made a sort of diplomatic presence by the West Germans possible in East Berlin and vice versa. We couldn't do very much and we couldn't move, well we could move around freely. We had free access to move around but we were very closely watched and monitored. It was never obtrusive but it was tough, it was tough in many ways but fascinating. It was a wonderful assignment and I thought it was a great assignment.

Q: What were you doing?

RUEDY: I was the second person in a two-man press and cultural operation and initially I was much involved in moving into the new embassy. We established a little library in the new embassy. The whole question of public access was a big, big deal if the people, the East Germans, would actually be allowed to, would dare to come into the embassy. We hung up our sign and everybody was welcome but would they come? Getting the library set up, starting a program on film weeks, once a week where we invited audiences to come and, you know, chat them up. There were people from all different walks of whatever, officialdom and nonofficialdom, some people from the official sanctioned cultural community, other people that you've met and you never quite knew whether who you met was who they said they were. It was all a through the looking glass parade kind of experience. But it was a great assignment. We worked a lot with the GDR version of FSI (Foreign Service Institute). They did "studies" for the East German foreign ministry. They were very interested in getting a sense of what the Americans really thought and we would bring in American academics and some fairly high-powered folks. Bill Griffith from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was a guy that they listened to very closely and lots of other people too. People were interested; East Berlin was still pretty exotic for them so you know we would bring over some amazing people. We would go over to West Berlin and then I would escort them through Checkpoint Charlie and do this whole theology routine about how do you get through the checkpoint.

Q: You show the passport on the window but...

RUEDY: Exactly.

Q: But don't lower the window.

RUEDY: Exactly, there was a real; well you are familiar with the theology that developed around that.

Q: I never served there.

RUEDY: We were the American embassy to the "German Demokratic Republik" (German Democratic Republic) not in the "German Demokratic Republik" because our building was located in the Soviet Sector of the Four Power occupied city of Berlin. So as I say we were the "Amerikanische Botschaft" (American Embassy) what did we say "bei de Deutsche Demokratische Republik" and everything that we sent out was from the American embassy to the German Democratic Republic. Stuff that they sent to us would be to the American Embassy in the German Democratic Republic because they were trying to assert their sovereignty claim to the city of East Berlin, and that got very complicated and sometimes interesting. I remember the very first art exhibit that we did. It was a modest show, actually in retrospect not so modest, it was a good, good photographer. A photographer, Paul Strand, and we did a Paul Strand exhibit in East Berlin and we worked with the GDR Ministry of Culture on this exhibit. There were some long negotiations about what museum it would be in; they were interested in showing their openness, cultural engagement with the west without really doing it in a safe way in a measured way. So anyway we got a great venue for it, the Yatis "Museem" (museum) in Berlin and they did great posters for us. But the posters said 'with this exhibit of Paul Strand, in the "Berlinhauptstadt GDR" (Berlin capital city). That was one word as far as they were concerned "Berlinhauptstadt GDR" Berlin capital of the German Democratic republic. We, of course, insisted that Berlin, East Berlin, was the Soviet sector. So big deal if these posters go up the exhibit goes down, can't do it under those circumstances. This was non-negotiable as far as we were concerned. They damn well should have known it was non-negotiable, this was basic, this was basic to the whole QA (question and answer) to the whole approach. We knew where their red lines were and they knew where our red lines were. Anyway if this exhibit goes up or if this poster goes up the exhibit goes down. Anyway they came up with a nice poster that said "The Museem_____ in Berlin" and it was OK as far as we were concerned so the posters went up, I have a copy of the poster at home and the exhibit was a tremendous success and it was one of the first things that we had done to engage culture with the GDR.

Q: Well how did you find, I mean, did you find that culture was a solid way to open up relations with the GDR?

RUEDY: Yes, I think so. I think we did a lot of good in retrospect. A lot of these people even people at the Institute for International Affairs or what was the "Institute for Politische _____" I forget some outfit that did more of their stuff for the communist party they were more connected to the party, they were all party obviously. It was all interconnected but some more so than others. But some of them had amazing views of the United States because they had never been to the United States. They really had no sense of what we were like as a society. I think they really saw the United States through their own very Marxist prism and were expecting at any moment a revolution would break out or whatever. So engaging them and involving them in things like the international visitors program and real exchange I think that was a good thing and a debate that we always had was can this place really exist on its own. Does the GDR have sufficient claim to sovereignty and to the loyalty of the people for whom the GDR exists as a separate and independent state. We used to talk about that in the embassy and that was the basic question and of course that got answered later on. As it happened I was at the American embassy in Bonn serving when the wall came down and very quickly the GDR imploded and even before the wall came down in Berlin I think East Germans were voting with their feet. I think what really precipitated it all were television reports that they are sniping the barbed wire between Hungary and Austria and at that point lots of East Germans began thinking "Hmm, if they are cutting the barbed wire between Hungary and Austria I can drive through Czechoslovakia..."

Q: Well were talking about '89 or so.

RUEDY: Yes, that is right.

Q: Let's stick to...

RUEDY: Yeah, I'm getting ahead of myself. But that was the question we were asking. Would these people if they were a separate and independent German Republic be content to be citizens of the separate and independent German Democratic Republic or was this a state that exists only because of 500,000 Soviet troops and the Brezhnev Doctrine and a wall around it.

Q: Well did you get the feeling of that everybody was reporting to everybody to the Stasis and all that? I mean was this sort of the atmosphere?

RUEDY: Yes, that was pervasive and everybody thought that everybody else was informing on them and they were right. We got to know some people from the Evangelical Church, the Lutheran Church and you know going out to their house was always something and we were observed always and you never knew who these people were either. Were they Stasi plants or were they who they said they were? And yeah you always had the feeling that everything that I'm doing and everybody who I'm talking to is subject to reporting to the Stasi. Everything that I say in my apartment and everything that I say on the telephone is possibly being monitored or being listened to. But, you know, you get over that and think, what the hell, I'm here to do press and cultural work and I'm here to engage the GDR and that is what we will do. We were very busy and we did a lot of good stuff.

Q: I can see on the cultural side you can be busy but what about the press side? I mean talk about a controlled press.

RUEDY: Oh yeah, that was pretty hopeless. There it was a matter of engaging people of the press was a big, big deal as far as the East Germans were concerned. I mean Marxist theology and the press was agitprop. That is where you would address the masses, that is where you win over the masses to the appropriate class consciousness. So the people in the press were convinced communists and convinced ideologues but nevertheless we were engaging them and trying to work with them and we got involved with some of them in international visitors programs. I mean they were communists and we weren't going to change their point of view but they learned something from these trips. I think it changed their opinions somewhat. They did some good reporting as to what the Americans were really like. But trying to place anything in the press or the press giving any sort of favorable coverage to anything having to do with the United States was nonsense. Everybody knew before it happened before we got your "Neues Deutschland" (New Germany) you knew what the editorial news treatment of any given story is going to be, that was never in question.

Q: Well I take it that there was a little different attitude that you were observing there. I've talked to people who were in Poland around this time and they used to say that they were convinced that there must have been four or five dedicated communists in the country but they weren't quite sure which ones they were.

RUEDY: I think there were more dedicated communists in East Germany. They had a different history than Poland I think and a really lot of dedicated folks in East Germany had been communists even in the 1920s. So they came from communist backgrounds that went back to the 1920s, 1930s. Some of them had gone into exile in the Soviet Union. There was a wonderful film I would love to take a look at it again, "Ich War Neunsein" (I Was Nineteen), it was done by Konrad Wolff who was the head of the GDR Academy.

Q: The title means I Was Nineteen.

RUEDY: I Was Nineteen, yeah, and he was the head of the East German Academy of Art. He was a major figure in the art world and a very talented filmmaker. His brother Mischa Wolff as he was called was the head of intelligence. He was Le Carre's guy; he was the best of the best. They were from a communist family that had gone into exile in the Soviet Union fleeing ahead of Hitler. The film, "Ich War Neunsein," was an officer in the Red Army at the age of nineteen as a first lieutenant in the Soviet army that marched into Eastern Germany and was guilty of course of all kinds of atrocities and stuff like that. The film is really almost an apologia of this is the way it was and this is what we did and this is why we did it. It has some gruesome scenes of people shooting in the haystacks where Germans were hiding from the Soviet army and stuff like that. But I Was Nineteen and the Hitler regime that we attacked had suffered tremendously from in the Soviet Union was you know, there it was. It was just a great, great film but these are the kinds of people that I think some of the communists in East Germany drew their inspirations from.

Q: Again, jumping way ahead but today there seems to be a problem with the East Germans who also brought up that they had no connection to the Hitler regime at all, that everything nasty was done essentially by the West Germans.

RUEDY: That was very much the case. We used to laugh about that that you know it was as if the East Germans got out from under the guilt business completely. You had the impression that in all of the Third Reich these were Bavarians who came over and South Germans or whatever and took over the country and did all these terrible, horrible things. Then thanks to the Red Army they were finally kicked out with great bloodshed and mayhem obviously and they all went to West Germany and established the Federal Republic of Germany and now we communists were morally pure and we're establishing this guilt-free regime on East German soil.

Q: How about the attitude that you were picking up towards the Soviets?

RUEDY: It was very much mixed. I remember one conversation I had with the guy from this GDR academy, this diplomatic think tank. There was a question of well doesn't the presence of half a million Soviet troops on your territory impinge on your own state sovereignty? He came up with the very logical thing of if there weren't these five hundred thousand Red Army troops on our country we wouldn't need a sovereignty at all. He was right. I think people even East Germans saw it as a necessary evil even people who were committed to the GDR regime and there were some who thought that our state wouldn't exist without the presence of these. They didn't have much contact with the GDR population. I mean you went out, and we traveled around East Germany a lot and saw the Soviet troops all over the place. You saw the tanks and we stayed in one place up north of Berlin and heard the tanks rumbling not far away at night doing their exercises. MiGs would fly low over the lakes and the military presence was everywhere. But, there wasn't much contact I think and people would chuckle about it.

Q: Well were you picking up, I mean later you were in the Soviet Union but were you picking up the feeling that gee East Germany is a dynamic industrial might? This became sort of a leitmotif that went around and when the place collapsed they realized my God they really got stuck with a mess, an economic mess. I mean was it part of your...

RUEDY: I don't know, now in retrospect. I mean it was interesting things that we thought they were going on with what was it, coal gasification, because East Germany was desperate for energy. Gas to run the tanks was a big problem for the old Third Reich folks so they kind of inherited the technology of Ververmacht and were trying to do coal gasification.

Q: You would see the cars during World War II with these monstrosities looking like boilers stuck on top of cars.

RUEDY: Yeah, so there was interest that maybe there was technology going on in coal gasification and liquefaction and various other things. People were still waiting eight years to get a lousy car. There was a lot of propaganda about the wonderful strides they were making and how things were getting better and better and better but when you looked around people were not living very well and it was just not a very dynamic place.

Q: Were you seeing, particularly of the intellectual elite, music and cultural things sort of a steady leakage to the west?

RUEDY: Very much so, very much so. This is all ancient history now but fifteen, twenty years ago this was a big deal that everybody in East Germany could watch West German TV and getting over to West Germany was like going to the moon. But you can get "abends kommt der klassen feind" (at night comes the class enemy) so everybody would be watching the same programs on West German television. They wouldn't talk about it the next day in the office or school because that was a bad thing if you had watched West German TV. But people were very aware of the West and very aware of western culture, western consumerism. People detracted from that a little bit - I mean here we were building this idealistic communist society and over there they had all gone consumer crazy. But there was a great deal of envy and a great feeling that well geeze if it weren't for being stuck in this GDR we could be doing that too.

Q: We were sponsoring some trips to the United States?

RUEDY: Yeah.

Q: How did these work out?

RUEDY: Very well, we didn't have a large program; we had a couple of programs. We had IREX, which was an exchange of research scholars. The research scholars did no lecturing. It was strictly American researchers going to East Germany to the GDR and GDR researchers coming to the United States. When I was there that was a very small program and as I recall it amounted to 36 man months per year so it didn't amount to a whole lot of people. While I was there we increased it to 64. We doubled it as I recall and they would present their slate of researchers that they wanted to come to the United States and we would present our slate and we would knock off their nuclear scientists and their physicists. They were interested in access to American science and we were interested in sending over constitutional scholars and contemporary historians. They didn't want those so it was always sort of a give and take as to who would be acceptable to the program.

We got a great deal out of that program because we sent over lots of scholars who were going into archives that Americans had not had access to since 1930 and some of them were doing great work on Bach and Martin Luther because that is where the archives were. Some of the others were into much more sensitive areas talking about more contemporary issues. GDR party archives stuff like that. That was a no-no. You couldn't get into that and great resourcefulness and purpose were needed. A few of the scholars did it but it was tough. We had some really good American scholars and I was there for three years. After they would get back to the States we would remain in contact and they would send us copies of their books and their monographs. And by God by the end of three years in East Berlin I had a pretty good size shop that they had sent me and I looked at the shelf and I thought "my God these are all books that would not have been written and scholarship that would not have been done but for the existence of this IREX program."

So that was one thing that was on the academic side. No student exchange. The IREXers generally did not lecture before GDR student groups; some of the more resourceful ones developed fairly wide contacts in the GDR and the community. In fact, one guy got married to an East German economist and that was an interesting story. She had a hell of a time in getting her exit visa; but a great couple. I kept in contact with them for years and years afterward.

On the official exchange side we would invite a number of GDR folks to come to the United States under the International Visitors Program. I forget how many we would invite in the course of a year but we would invite writers, film makers, some government academics to come to the United States for generally a month and in some cases a longer period of time but generally a month. They would travel around the country and get a sense of who we were as a society. One guy I remember, he was sort of an ideology type, a friendly enough guy but a real convinced communist. He was from one of the research institutes and he came to the United States and then over the week, he spoke pretty good English. He was one of those people who were coming in to study the United States and he was amazed with the openness actually. He could travel around on his own, he didn't need an escort or interpreter so people in Washington would set up appointments for him. Then he got a rental car one weekend and he locked his key in his rental car and what do I do now? Somebody said you have to call the police. Oh my God if I call the police and they find out that I'm an East German, what's going to happen to me? He said the policeman came over and said, "Oh locked the key in the car, well not a big deal." So the policeman got this tool out and reached in and pulled the key out. He never even checked my driver's license. If I had known that I would have asked for a better car. But he was just really impressed by the openness and the complete informality and the complete lack of this control police state. He was up in Maine and locked his key in his car and a friendly policeman comes and unlocks the car for him and sends him on his way. That just made a tremendous impression.

Another guy a good, good filmmaker, he made a great film. He had that film in the can before we sent him to Iowa City, to send him to the Iowa Writers Program for two months. The film, Solo Sunny, was about a young East German woman who felt really tied down and closed in and claustrophobic in this very small society and she really identified with modernism and rock bands and stuff like that. She wasn't all that bright, she was kind of a working class type but her great ambition was to do a solo and in Marxist terms solos aren't good but the solo became sort of a metaphor to break away from the whole destructive part of the Marxist state. Anyway a very bright guy. I don't know whatever happened to him but he was very much moved by the experiences he had. He said he grew professionally a lot by that experience and obviously for a couple of months. So we were doing that type of thing.

Q: What sort of cultural exhibits struck the most, you might say, responsive cord?

RUEDY: A lot of interest in American film and we did an American film week in three East German cities, not in Berlin. We ran into great issues which we didn't realize we would get into, copyright and copyright holders of the film very often were West German companies and very good dubbed versions of the film would exist but we couldn't get at them because they were interested in showing them on West German television or whatever. That got terribly, terribly complicated but we carried it off finally and we had some good American films, the classic American. They were interested in more contemporary stuff but we couldn't get those so these were classic American films. It was a western as I can recall and I think maybe a Mr. Smith Goes to Washington type film and Capra type of film, I forget. So anyway there was a great deal of interest in whatever film.

Literature, American literature was also a great interest to people and there again they just had no access to American literature in books and in, you would see it on television but books, a copy of an American book they all existed in German translation but they were not available in the GDR, just not available, they just were not.

Q: Was this because actually a lot of books just have no recourse...

RUEDY: No it was strictly ideological, this was literature from the West and they didn't do it. Sometimes interesting I still got it I think from a professor that I knew did a very interesting translation, a good translation, of poems of the professional poet...

Q: Robinson. Robert Lowell.

RUEDY: Yes, exactly Robert Lowell. He did a really good German translation of Robert Lowell's poetry. He did a great introduction, which saw Robert Lowell not as this great confessional poet looking into his soul in his own madness and stuff like that but really interacting with capitalist consumer society. Of course, you can read that in Lowell. There is a lot of that in Lowell and it was a very good what is it for the union dead where the rock of ages becomes a Moser safe and survives the blast and all that stuff. Well anyway he was looking at Robert Lowell from a more Marxist standpoint but it was a legitimate interesting, I think intellectual, honest way of looking at it and here it was a Robert Lowell collection but you didn't see much of that. A lot of that stuff was available in the BAD in excellent German translations but did not make their way to East Germany because all of that stuff was confiscated at the border, it could not get in.

Q: How about American music? The kids wearing jeans added much to the dismay of whom, the critics East and West?

RUEDY: They loved it, they loved American music, American jazz. We had a couple of American music groups over there. My boss who was a good, good guy a very senior Foreign Service officer, Ed Alexander, a man in his late-eighties now and I still keep in contact with him and he lives here in Bethesda. He is a specialist in music, he is a musicologist and was a music guy for RIAS, Radio in the American Sector, early in his career. So he did most of the music and stuff and me not being musical I didn't get into that much. I did more on the literature side and stuff like that.

Q: You left there in 1980, where did you go?

RUEDY: I went from Berlin in 1980, East Berlin you know we advertised as a hardship post and it really was a hardship post, it was tough in many ways. From there I went to the best assignment that I had in my Foreign Service career because they sent me to Dusseldorf as branch public affairs officer and that was my onward assignment after leaving East Berlin.

Q: OK. Today is the 28th of April of 2005. You were in Dusseldorf in 1980 until when?

RUEDY: From 1980 to 1984, for four years and it was a terrific assignment and an interesting four years in the Federal Republic.

Q: What were our interests there and could you mention who the consul general was then in Dusseldorf and what you were doing.

RUEDY: Yeah, the consul general when I first got there was Tom Turqman, I believe, and then later on David Edminster. Terrific people to work with and as branch public affairs officer I had a small staff. I had four Germans who worked for me, excellent people, really good people; a couple of them had master's degrees from American universities and all that kind of thing. My boss was down at the embassy in Bonn comfortably far away and I was responsible for public diplomacy, public affairs activities in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, which is the most populous area of Germany, the big Rhine-Ruhr complex. Dusseldorf, the capital, but also I spent a good deal of time in places like Essen, in Dortmund and Muenster and Krefeld and throughout that big, big region, so it was an interesting beat to cover at the time.

Q: In 1980 how stood relations with West Germany?

RUEDY: It was an interesting period, the four years that I spent there because I arrived in Dusseldorf not long after, well let's see, the 1980 election. Reagan was elected President. I think there was a great cultural gap between the Reagan appeal to the American public and the concerns that Europeans, certainly Germans, had about Reagan and we were entering a very difficult period. The Soviets had invaded Afghanistan, there was all kinds of stirrings and stuff like that beginning in Poland and Eastern Europe. The big front burner issue was the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) "Double Beschluss," the Dual-Track Decision which had been made under the government of Helmut Schmidt and SPD (Social Democratic Party) government. The Germans, in particular the Europeans in general, during an earlier era had been very concerned about the American commitment to western Europe and to NATO. They were especially concerned of the stationing of Soviet SS20 missiles which were capable of hitting western Europe but not capable of hitting the United States. So there was all of this and it sounds terribly arcane now and it was but a good deal of discussion about decoupling security interests of the United States and those of the western European NATO allies. As a result a decision had been made to answer the Soviet stationing of the SS20s with stationing of medium range ballistic missiles by the United States...

Q: The Pershing.

RUEDY: ...in Europe. The Pershing, exactly. There were actually two as I recall, there were cruise missiles which were going to be stationed in Italy, I believe, and in Germany and perhaps in another country as well.

Q: The Netherlands I think got into it.

RUEDY: Yes, you are right. These were the cruise missiles but the things that were really of concern to people were the Pershing IIs and the P2s were going to go only into Germany so it put Germany square in the center of that whole discussion. The P2s that were talked about were capable of hitting the Soviet Union within five minutes or ten minutes of liftoff from bases in Germany and there was great, great, great opposition suddenly to the stationing of the Pershing missiles in Germany. The peace movement was well underway and it was a rather turbulent period in terms of German-American relations.

Not long after I got there the SPD was going through a great deal of sorting out. I don't remember exactly when this occurred but it seems to me that it was in the spring or summer perhaps of 1981, the Schmidt government collapsed essentially because the left wing of the SPD was no longer supported and of course this is where it gets a little complicated. The FDP (Free Democratic Party) coalition collapsed. Governments were built during that period of time in post-war Germany, not so much by election victories on the part of the SPD or on the part of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), it was more a matter of the FDP switching coalition partners and suddenly because of all of the turbulence within the SPD Schmidt stepped down and that whole era, the Schmidt-Brandt era was gone. A CDU government took over, a coalition government under Helmut Kohl. So the whole political complexion in Germany changed quite dramatically and then as I say there was a great deal of turbulence in connection with implementation of the dual-track decision, that's the decision to go ahead to station or not to station P2 missiles in Germany.

Q: Well now this was sort of in many ways the last ploy of the Soviet Union, this idea of putting the SS20s was the idea that this might split Germany essentially or Europe off from the United States.

RUEDY: Yes it was. That was definitely true and we saw it played out. For me it was a particularly interesting vantage point. I was an entrenched guy, branch public affairs officer in Dusseldorf so I was not a ranking person in the corridors of Bonn. But North Rhine-Westphalia was really the center of SPD power and moderate SPD power. The state accounted for about a third, more than a third, of the Federal Republic's total population and this was the mainstay of the SPD in Germany. This was labor union territory. This was the Ruhr, this was Essen, and Dortmund and the big, big newspapers, moderate newspapers, but left leaning left of center newspapers in the heartland of SPD territory. So it was interesting to get to know local political officials and newspaper editors and others and to get a sense of how they really came down on all of these issues. I was astonished that as a low ranking or you know fairly new officer in the consulate general in Dusseldorf I would have access to big deal newspaper editors. The Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung (Westphalia Peoples Newspaper) is the largest circulation by far in Germany and I knew the editor personally and he came to my house. This had nothing to do with me personally. It had to do with their concern about the connection with the United States and the alliance and all that kind of stuff, so it was interesting to see all of that play out.

Q: I mean you had a couple of things going for you but a couple of balls in play. One was Reagan, obviously the Germans knew him as a cowboys movie star...

RUEDY: Exactly.

Q: Which is always scary but you know and coming from the pretty far right of the American political spectrum and then on top of that you have the introduction of nuclear weapons which might attract unwanted attention from the Soviets nuclear weapons. How did you play with this?

RUEDY: The Reagan business obviously scared the Germans to death. This was somebody outside of their political framework and they had a hard time figuring out Reagan and Reagan's appeal to the American public. I remember one of the very first programs that I did in Dusseldorf after arriving there as BPAO (Branch Public Affairs Officer). It was not long after the election, it must have been in late November and I had Richard Scammon, who was a well known American public opinion pollster, at my house in Dusseldorf. I invited some of the big deal editors and they came. Scam and I remember talking to them about how Reagan fit into the American political culture and how during the election the democrats had tried to pull the bad guy mask, the ogre mask down on Reagan and it just didn't fit because here you had this very amiable character. I think it really helped put the Reagan presidency into a political context for these very sharp and smart and shrewd and quite senior German analysts. I remember a couple of them afterwards told me, "Oh yes, this is good, this was something that was informative for me." It was that kind of thing of trying to bring the realities of American political culture to the Germans and to some extent vice-versa as well and also to keep the focus on the whole reason for the "double beschluss", for the dual-track decision. Then I think in an overarching way the importance of solidarity in the alliance and the importance of shared values between the Germans, the western Europeans and the United States and how it was important to keep that connection.

Fairly soon after I had got to Dusseldorf some people from Krefeld called the consul general and asked to get together for lunch because they had this wonderful idea. It was really something that came to dominate the four years that I spent in Dusseldorf and it was a wonderful event. They had the idea of making Krefeld the focal point for a major celebration. This was local boosterism, they were interested in raising the profile of Krefeld and putting Krefeld on the map. To make Krefeld a center of attention for a 300th anniversary of German emigration to the United States. The first Germans had emigrated from Krefeld to William Penn's Pennsylvania in 1683. The first Germans I think set sail from Krefeld going down the Rhine to what is Antwerp or whatever, or Rotterdam and then across the Atlantic at the invitation of William Penn to settle in Pennsylvania - Germantown which is now part of Philadelphia. Those were the first Pennsylvania Dutch, the first Pennsylvania Germans and as we discovered became the very first of the ethnic group of the German emigrants to the United States which were the largest ethnic component to go to the United States and emigration continued obviously lots and lots in the 19th century after 1848 and all of that stuff.

Q: You had a rather famous consul there too in Krefeld, Bret Harte.

RUEDY: Yes, yes, Bret Harte was the consul in Krefeld when it was part of Prussia because Krefeld after the Napoleonic wars had become part of Prussia and it was a textile center and I wound up spending lots and lots of time in Krefeld.

Q: For some reason I did some work on Bret Harte and I think buttons were a big deal.

RUEDY: Yes, he has a couple of good short stories. Krefeld was the center of the textile industry and he's got a couple of short stories, which draw on his experience in Krefeld, which was not all together positive. He didn't like Prussian recommendations all that much. Edinburgh, I think.

Q: Edinburgh or Glasgow, one or the other.

RUEDY: He was a good deal happier in Scotland but the period in Krefeld was interesting and some of the buildings that were described in his short stories are recognizable buildings in Krefeld. Anyway, I got to spend lots of time in Krefeld over the next number of years. There was lots and lots of stuff that took place in connection with the tri-centennial of German emigration to the United States. The climax came at a big deal "festock" they called it in German in Krefeld in I believe it was in June of 1983. It all got to be a big deal. Helmut Kohl was there and then Vice President George Bush was there to represent the United States. There was much speech making and also lots and lots of demonstrators and demonstrations and things got quite bouncy and violence. The motorcade was stoned and it was a big headline in the Washington Post. This all occurred on a Sunday in Germany and, of course, it was in time to make the Sunday newspapers in the United States so it became quite a bouncy, bouncy event.

The entire tri-centennial thing I think got to be a big deal because of the state of German-American relations at the time and American concern about the peace movement and about how things were developing in Germany and about opposition to the dual-track decision. It was that whole constellation of things that got Helmut Kohl to Krefeld and that got George Bush to Krefeld and made this whole thing into such a big, big deal. That thing, I believe it was June of 1983, was the culminating event but during the lead up there was lots and lots of activity. I was involved very much in that. I gave a couple of speeches before the city chambers of commerce and the trade groups and we really worked hard to bring this to the attention of the people in Bonn to get it on to the embassy scope as an event that ought to be supported and it kind of brewed right along. It got to be a major event.

Q: How did various elements in the United States respond to this? I'm thinking of towns and states and the State Department?

RUEDY: The State Department had a great deal of interest. There was some interest on the part of folks in Philadelphia, and so we tried very much to engage the United States side as well. Of course, here in the U.S. it's a much bigger country with lots of stuff going on. I think in Germany there was not disappointment, I think that is putting it too strongly but you know a feeling that this is a big deal here in Germany why isn't it a big deal in the United States. But, there was a fair amount of publicity in the United States in connection with the tri-centennial. The State Department and the German embassy certainly made an effort to make this into a big deal. Not far from the Washington Monument now right along Constitution Avenue (between 15th and 17th Streets) is a lovely little green area and if you look carefully you will see little signs that say the German-American Friendship Garden 1683-1983 celebrating 300 years of German emigration to the United States.

So there were some articles, there were some TV programs, it didn't get lost but it wasn't nearly as big a deal in the United States as it was in Germany. I think in Germany people were very much aware that this was going on, that we had 300 years of German emigration to the United States. The German emigrants constituted the largest, single ethnic group of European migrants, from any country to the U.S. and German contributions to America and blah, blah, blah, it went on and on.

I did a couple of articles for papers, and for magazines and gave a couple of speeches, which I think were pretty good actually. I did quite a bit of research because it was a topic that interested me so I'm obviously a part of that. There was a personal connection as well, very much a personal connection since my own ethnic background is German-American. But the first German families that departed from Krefeld were actually kicked out, of course, and they weren't Krefelders. Krefeld is very Catholic, it's the Catholic Rhineland so Krefeld is very Catholic but these families were actually from further up stream from the Rhine and they were actually German Anabaptists, Mennonites. They had a tough time of it. There was obviously a religious affinity, a theological affinity with these people and with the Quakers and William Penn who's really all part of the same religious movement.

Q: Sort of [inaudible]

RUEDY: Exactly, that's exactly right. So these people were kicked out of the area where they were in in the south, wound up in Krefeld and from Krefeld moved on then down the Rhine to the ports and at William Penn's invitation over to Pennsylvania. They became the first Pennsylvania Dutch, and Amish and Mennonites and what have you. Of course, ultimately the group that I grew up in in the Amana colonies in Iowa were part of the same general religious movement.

Q: You mentioned the stoning of the Vice President but was this effort in '83 to cement ties and all, was that seen as a target by left wing wings and others or was it happening on its own?

RUEDY: I think it was seen as a target to some extent. I mean there were lots of demonstrations going on, the peace movement. I remember outside of our house in Dusseldorf was a sort of a traffic circle and that led on into the Dusseldorf fair grounds. Not because my house was there, but because of the traffic circle and the traffic flow I remember we had big, big groups of demonstrators who gathered at that traffic circle and then marched on down to downtown Dusseldorf. There was not a problem in Dusseldorf but in some areas some of these demonstrations became quite violent and there was lots of concern about the peace movement and the peace movement getting out of hand. There were certainly folks who were encouraging that. I think more radical elements and I think a lot of Germans were deeply, deeply concerned. They felt the Pershing IIs go in and we have war. There was a great deal of fear about what would happen as a result of the Pershing IIs. Then, of course, when you had statements from the United States like 'there are more important things than peace' or whatever and some of these statements were made offhand and in the context of the speech or in the context of the American political debate or in the context of what Reagan was trying to do, they perhaps made sense. But, when they were reported in "Der Spiegel" (The Mirror newspaper) or "Stern" or some of the more sensationalist German newspapers they just drove people nuts. People thought the Americans are going to cause this war and we here in Germany are going to be the ones who are going to get blown up. There were people that really felt that way. They were convinced that the P2s go in and the balloon goes up.

Q: You were dealing with I imagine by the time you got there in the early '80s there must have had some difficult cadre with German leaders and with just plain Germans who had been to the United States and all. Was that a good thing or not?

RUEDY: It was a very, very good thing. I have heard analysis of the public diplomacy and how important it was to the implementation of the Dual Track decision, the "Double Beschluss." There was a great deal of discussion of the merits of countering the Soviet stationing of the SS20s with the Pershing IIs and how eventually people became convinced of this because the arguments were so overwhelming and so convincing and I think basically that wasn't it at all. I think what brought the German public around, and I think there remained lots of skepticism on the side of the German public at large not just the radicals but also the broad center of the German public, was a gradual conviction that the relationship with the United States and the solidarity of the NATO alliance was something terribly, terribly, important. That needed to be maintained and although they didn't necessarily like or agree with the stationing of Pershing 20s this now was on track and somehow it had to move forward and be carried out. They couldn't very well draw back from that or change that because the risk of that would have been greater than the risk of implementation. I think there we really drew upon the fact that there were so many Germans with first hand experience in the United States who knew us as a society who felt a solidarity with us, who felt deep in their bones I think a conviction that the German-American relationship was fundamentally important to the security of Germany that they weren't going to let something like the "Double Beschluss" get in the way.

I experienced that in talking to some of these chief editors. These were sort of New York Times type guys. They had newspapers with, forget the circulation, but hundreds of thousands and they were the newspapers that SPD politicians in Germany in Bonn would turn to in the morning because that is where their constituency was. The "Neue Rhine Zeitung" (The New Rhine Newspaper) and the "Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung" (The Westfälische Newspaper) and some of these other big Rhine-Ruhr papers. Talking to them they would tell you, "Man that year at Stanford as a young man and it changed my life. The relationship with the United States. I know America as a country and all that stuff." So I think during this period we were very much benefiting from lots and lots of work that had gone on for a generation.

I think in that sense the whole notion of the 1983 celebration of German emigration to the United States was right on as well. I think it put the emphasis on the long term, the relationship, the cultural relationship, everything else between Germany and the United States. So as I say it got away from the issues of the moment no matter how important they were to the overarching issues that were permanent in the relationship and I think from that standpoint it was a good, good thing.

Q: Did you have, did you play any role or is this how it came about during exchanges with the American universities?

RUEDY: Yeah, I played some role in that. The PAO (Public Affairs Officer) who was in Germany at the time was a guy who I admire tremendously; he was really great Tom Tuch. This was all kind of a piece. I mean it fit right in to the tri-centennial and Tom was my big, big boss in Germany so first of all to convince him and the other people in the embassy that this event in Krefeld was something that deserved people's attention. He really picked up on this and you know the whole successor generation became a buzzword for us and he inaugurated I think you know he really worked on the then ambassador to Germany.

Q: Who was that?

RUEDY: Arthur Burns and Burns was a huge figure. I didn't know him personally but what a personality, what an individual. They made a big effort to increase youth exchange. The congress bundestag youth exchange was inaugurated, was launched bringing an exchange in high school students. There was much emphasis on increased numbers of international visitors and especially involved in young people, academics and young journalists and things like the IV (international visitors) program. We were working on that very, very hard. At the macro level at the embassy in Bonn people like Tom Tuch were really behind it and pushing it. It all kind of tied in with the whole tri-centennial effort, etc., etc. so it was an interesting time.

Q: Were you able to reach places like New Braunfels? There are a lot of German communities all over the place.

RUEDY: You know we had a guy from New Braunfels, a professor who came over a number of times and got him to give lectures and interviews. There were all kinds of strange tie-ins because he found a German musical production in sort of the tradition of the German cabaret at the time that had been staged in Texas by German emigrants. So, there were lots and lots of connections and then Chicago and little towns across the Midwest and so on, it got to be a big deal, it was gratifying. It would have been my last New Years in Krefeld, in Germany. In every German city they do a Neue Yaaren Fund (a New Years reception). This is a very solemn and important occasion where all of the city fathers gather together and the mayor gives a nice speech and they give awards and stuff like that. In New Year's 1984 I got the Stadtziegel of the city of Krefeld, the city seal, and a nice speech. Of course it was not for me, it really wasn't for me personally. This is not false modesty; it's the truth. It was this idea that they had felt the support of the United States and the support of the embassy and the support of everybody, the support of the consulate early on in carrying through this event which turned out to be I think a tremendous success. It was a nice event and then it turned out to be potentially so difficult. I think it woke up people to the concern that maybe this whole business is getting out of hand. Maybe we really ought to step back from the whole hysteria of the moment and look at the eternal, look at the basics. We don't need headlines in the American press about how the American vice president is being stoned in the German city. We don't need stuff about the violence of the peace movements. There seemed to be maybe a stepping back from the brink that occurred sometime that spring. Maybe some of the publicity around the Krefeld event that was only part of it but it had something to do with that. I had the impression that gradually the air was being let out of the balloon and people were coming back down to earth and here we are and what do we do and maybe we could have done it differently and decided differently two years ago but here we are in July of 1983 and what do we do next. Of course the dual track decision was carried out and you had the proposal for the zero solution and eventually negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union and all kinds of stuff, so it worked out. But, it was a bouncy period. I think, 1981, 1982 it was a bouncy period for German-American relations.

Q: Was the Green Movement going or how did it translate into your area?

RUEDY: Yeah, very much so. The Greens were the left wing fringe and I think the SPD was terribly concerned about the Greens, and it was true, the Greens taking votes away from the SPD and Petra Kelly was around. Petra Kelly came to the event in Krefeld, as did all of the other German political dignitaries of both parties. The Greens were behind a lot of the peace movement stuff and the left wing of the SPD sort of coalesced. There was a lot of concern about the Green Party, whether they would become a permanent fixture on the political landscape in Germany, what the raise of the Green Party would do to what had been an arrangement between the CDU, the SPD and the FDP and whether they would surpass the five percent and get into the German Bundestag and become a future coalition partner. Of course, all of that eventually transpired but no, that was all going on at that time.

Q: What about sort of the Baader-Meinhof type thing? Were they going on this terrorist type thing or had that pretty well petered out?

RUEDY: That had pretty well petered out. There was still some of that going on I think, but I don't recall it having the immediacy that it had in the previous period.

Q: What about was there a significant communist party in there?

RUEDY: No, not really. There was a good deal of concern I think about communist influence on the political left in Germany but I never felt that communism at...SPD union types and they were more center SPD and I think were concerned as well about what was happening to the left wing of the SPD. These were the SPD centrists and this was the Schmidt SPD and they were concerned about the left wing of the SPD kind of fracturing off and moving toward the Greens and dropping the SPD by a few percentage points. Some of those people we would talk and they would say, "Yeah. I mean these guys from the south the SPD leaders they can posture because they don't have to win elections they know they never will. They don't have to govern because they know they never will, so they can make all kinds of statements but we here are out to win elections and we need to appeal to the center and we need to appeal to voters and we are not into posturing, we are into governing." So it was a very different SPD perspective from the ones that you got in other regions of Germany.

Q: I suspect particularly where they were that they were probably, please correct me if I am wrong, less interest in the GDR; I mean unification or anything else. You know they didn't even have a lot of sympathy with them or not.

RUEDY: No, not a hell of a lot of sympathy for the GDR certainly. People were certainly interested in the GDR. They were very interested in my experience in the GDR because here I had lived in East Berlin for three years. So people were very, very interested in talking to me and hearing from me about that because there was practically no contact between the GDR and the West Germans.

I remember a book that appeared at the time, "Die Andere Planet" (The Other Planet), and this was the GDR because people simply didn't know anything about it. People were very interested, it was the other Germany but it was all very distant and very abstract.

Q: Were you called upon to make speeches about your experiences?

RUEDY: Yes, I did. One of the things that I was supposed to be doing as a BPO was to go around and meet with groups of USOs, the young socialists and the Greens and the young CDU types. Some of these experiences were very interesting and I always was courteously received. People asked tough questions but people were interested as only Germans are and getting into a "gespracht" (spoken), in always wanting to talk, discuss and I was amazed instead of disappearing for the weekends like Americans do the Germans would go to political conclaves. So I would be invited to come up to Muenster to speak at this political conclave on when, Sunday afternoon. This happened a lot and I enjoyed it. It was fun and interesting to get to know people and to sort of get a sense of where they were coming from or what their concerns were.

But the point that you made earlier about sympathy for communists no, not at all. I didn't get any sense of that. I think the concern was the equidistant that they saw the Soviet Union as an adversary on one side but they saw the United States on the other side and in the super power rivalry German interests getting lost and Germans themselves being put in danger. There was one unforgettable Spiegel cover that I remember seeing; I think I saved it as a matter of fact which showed the very somber looking German citizen with one eye blinded by the hammer and cycle and the other eye blinded by the red, white and blue and putting Germans very much in the middle. Germans were in the cross hairs and the super power rivalry between the Soviet Union and this dangerously radical new Reagan administration being played out over the interests of the Germans.

Q: Did you sense...at one time in Germany people like myself, I served as an enlisted man in the armed forces in Germany and so many people, I mean Foreign Service, I also served in Frankfurt in Germany. One time we had a third of the Foreign Service in Germany and so many Americans had relatives who were in the armed forces going to Germany so it was very much a focal point. The normal American if he is going to go to Europe, Germany is about fifth or sixth on the list, I mean its the UK, France, Italy and Spain. Was there a sense of the American public wasn't paying that much attention to Germany?

RUEDY: I think Europeans in general, maybe Germans in particular, are always concerned that Americans don't know enough about Europe and don't know enough about Germany. That was the question that I ran into a lot and there you would say, "Well, the United States is a big, huge country and we are very focused on events within the United States and no we don't know as much about Europe as we should. We don't know enough about Germany as we ought to but an American in the United States will read a lot less, we'll hear a lot less about Germany than a German in Germany will read about and hear about the United States." I remember a good anecdote I'm fond of quoting this. A good friend of mine was press attaché^{1/2} at the American embassy in Bonn, a good, good guy. He was in Bonn during the period that I was up in Dusseldorf and he was a solid citizen always somebody good to go to for advice about how things really were. He said, "You know I'm press attaché^{1/2} here at the American embassy in Bonn and I imagine my colleague, my counterpart the Germany press attaché^{1/2} in Washington reading through his New York Times and Washington Post and seeing absolutely nothing about Germany and the ambassador going after him and saying, "Here you are press attaché^{1/2} and we've got nothing from Germany, we've got no news about Germany at all, what's wrong, what aren't you doing your job. Get out there and get busy." Then he said, "Here I am at the American embassy in Bonn and I read my "Frankfurter Allgemeine" (major Frankfurt newspaper) and I read my "Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung" (major Westfalia newspaper) and I don't see anything about the United States on page one and I wipe my brow and I think, 'thank God I've made it through another day.'"

But that was pretty much the story.

Q: Well did you get any feel, you had mentioned a term "the successor generation", did you get any feel that Germany was in a real transition stage. In other words the people from the Hitler time, I mean this is old news pretty much.

RUEDY: I think it was very true that things were changing in Germany - the people with the immediate post-war experience and working with the United States, a strong cultural affinity for things American. That was passing from the scene, had past from the scene. A new generation was moving in and the new generation, of course, felt differently about the United States than their predecessors had. That was all part of this whole 'successor generation' initiative getting young Germans reconnected with the U.S. That was 1984 we are talking about. Since that time practically another generation has passed so I can imagine now the situation in Germany is again very, very different. The cold war has ended, the basis for the relationship is much different.

Q: But of course in Germany, I mean there was this huge monster hanging around the Germans neck, the albatross or whatever you want to say about World War II...

RUEDY: Yes.

Q: And what it had done. This is a terrible inhibitor and you know just getting rid of that would give them much more freedom to be themselves.

RUEDY: Absolutely and it was interesting for me. My German is pretty good. You would get to talking with people and would hear just amazing, amazing stories of what people had experienced and what they had endured during World War II in the immediate post-war period and the relationship they had then with the Americans. At first there was a good deal of trepidation and fear and uncertainty but how they had begun working with the Americans and it must have been an amazing, amazing period. A couple people that I had gotten to know had actually experienced their introduction to America as prisoners of war and had come to the U.S. as POWs (prisoner of war) and experienced the U.S.

Q: In Mississippi and Arkansas...

RUEDY: Exactly, exactly. Maybe I related this story the last time. I forget, but it's a great story. A guy that I got to know was a good economist. He said that he was captured in North Africa and had thought that the war would be over soon and he would be going back as a hero to the fatherland. He got to the United States, to New York and traveled across this vast country where no bomb had ever fallen and he knew that none would and he said it was just an amazing experience. He recounted the kindness that he found from the United States, the informality and I think he went back to Germany after the war committed to working with Americans on the basis of that experience, rather amazing.

Q: As we were going there I would think that in your particular area in a way you were somewhat blessed by not having an awful lot of American troops there.

RUEDY: That's true and I was very much aware of that. I think my experience in Germany as a branch public affairs officer was very different from my colleagues in places like Munich or Stuttgart and Frankfurt because there were very, very few Americans in North Rhine-Westphalia. It was the British occupation zone initially. There was a British garrison in Dusseldorf not far from where we lived as a matter of fact and units of the British army of the Rhine that were stationed further west in Patterborn and air force bases on the other side of the Rhine but very little overt American presence. Businessmen a number of them and folks like that but no American troop presence.

Q: Did the embassy, did you get, is this a new ambassador and all down there?

RUEDY: Occasionally, yes, we occasionally did and my boss the public affairs officer would come up once in a while and we would try to bring in heavy duty speakers like the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ambassador at the time was W. Tapley Bennett who was extraordinarily good in speaking and meeting with groups. So, to bring in somebody like Tapley Bennett, American ambassador to NATO and get him together with a group of six or eight chief editors or foreign policy guys from the universities and maybe some political types from the North Rhine-Westphalia governments, SPD types from the North Rhine-Westphalia government was always very, very useful. So we did get a fair amount of that stuff but nothing really super VIP (very important person) or anything like that.

Q: After you left there in '84...

RUEDY: Yes, that is correct.

Q: You went where?

RUEDY: I came back on a first Washington assignment to be German desk officer at USIA, responsible on the Washington end for support for the programs in East and West Germany. So it was a logical onward assignment and I enjoyed it. I did that for two years and it was a very, very busy period. We had a super dynamic Director of USIA, Charles Wick. Wick was very interested in Germany; Wick had come to Krefeld and had also been very supportive of the whole tri-centennial activity so Germany was very, very much his scope. I was kept busy cranking out all kinds of stuff because he was a very dynamic and fairly demanding individual. He knew about Germany and he visited Germany a number of times while I was desk officer so I would be cranking out memos and decision papers and briefing papers and my God I worked hard and something that was on his scope at the time was RIAS, Radio In the American Sector. He and the German intendant of RIAS had come up with the idea of launching RIAS television so RIAS television was very much under Director Wick's scope. That meant that it was on my scope and it was on the scope of lots and lots of people and there were lots and lots of people between my level and his level. So, I did lots and lots of decision memos and briefing papers and background notes and all kinds of stuff.

Q: RIAS was in Berlin?

RUEDY: Yes, RIAS is in Berlin and the RIAS was established as an occupation radio. In fact, I think RIAS went on the air with little power to tell Germans where to line up for food and coal and everything else and it was on the air obviously during the Berlin airlift and later then during the period of the Berlin wall. By the time that I was involved in German affairs RIAS had pretty much evolved to become a German station. It was still under official American sovereignty because, of course, the United States was officially sovereign in the American sector of the city of Berlin, but RIAS had a German intendant. It also had an American who was serving at RIAS but the relationship between the German and the American was always very good. The day-to-day operation and day-to-day policy, everything else was handled on the German side. There was a good deal of back and forth about what the American political role would be in RIAS television, what the American financial contribution would be to RIAS television, all kinds of stuff. It got embroiled to some extent in German internal political concerns because I think there were people in Germany who perhaps saw RIAS and RIAS television as a counterweight to what some Berliners, some Germans felt was the left of.

So as I say there were all kinds of political agendas and political motives at work here and it was a very, very interesting couple of years.

Q: How did it come out?

RUEDY: RIAS television got established and it broadcast for a while and then of course everything changed in and around Berlin. I inherited RIAS television concerns later on because my onward assignment after two years on the German desk and a year at the National War College and then an interim stint as acting director of the operations center at USIA was an onward assignment as deputy public affairs officer in Bonn. I guess as a BPAO in Dusseldorf, as a field officer I complained sufficiently about the way things were handled in Bonn that for my sins I was told, "Well, OK, you are going to be the deputy public affairs counselor in Bonn and you are the person sort of in charge of field operations."

Anyway I got to Bonn then following the two years on the German desk at USIA during the Wick period and a year at the National War College and then an interim period as operations center director. I got to Bonn in February 1987.

Q: Well, to go back just a touch how did you find the War College?

RUEDY: The War College was tremendous. It was a wonderful experience and I found the faculty very stimulating and working with other students was tremendous, getting to know other State Department types and USIA types. There were two of us there from USIA and about a dozen or more from the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies. The bulk of the class obviously military officers, really sharp guys who had just made colonel or were on the verge of making colonel and had aspirations for making general I suppose and this was part of the career progression. I found it a tremendously interesting and stimulating year. I did a paper on the implementation of the dual-track decision and public affairs strategy in connection with that and it was a good year.

Q: Did you find looking at your assignments, East Germany, Dusseldorf and German desk and then back to Bonn, one could say you belonged to the German Club.

RUEDY: I guess I did, yeah.

Q: Did you find...was this a problem in USIA, I mean were people looking and sort of saying it was time you go off to Botswana or something like that?

RUEDY: Maybe so, I don't know if they said that or thought that but they didn't say it to me and I didn't lobby for the assignment to Bonn. As a matter of fact I remember thinking at the time this is probably not good. I had put in for a PAO position elsewhere in Europe. I thought that if I wanted to make senior Foreign Service I've really got to do a PAO job. I thought I was in line for a PAO job in Europe which would have been a good job. It was at the one level, not that these things are things that ought to be paid much attention to. I had also put in for the deputy public affairs officer job in Bonn as sort of a throw away. That was a senior foreign service job and I figured it would probably go to somebody who was a real member of the German club and had been around for a while. Here I was at the War college working away and not really paying too much attention to what was going on in headquarters. I called my career counselor to find out how things were going, how things were looking for this PAO job that I had applied for and thought I had a pretty good shot at and a couple of other PAO jobs that would have been great as well at sort of medium sized posts. I thought that maybe I could aspire to that and he said, "Oh didn't you realize you are being paneled this week for the DPAO (Deputy Public Affairs Officer) job in Bonn." I thought well wow you know DPAO job in Bonn and it's above my grade. I thought not getting a PAO and being stuck in Germany again and a job at a big embassy, what is this really going to do to me in terms of my "career." Do I need to worry here, but by that time it was too late. I was up to be paneled and I had put in for the job so, so be it.

Q: You were there from 1987 to when?

RUEDY: To 1991.

Q: So it was a very interesting time?

RUEDY: It was, it was. It turned out to be completely fortuitous because had Bonn been the nice quiet embassy in Bonn that I guess it had a reputation for being, being a DPAO there probably would not have been that great in terms of interest or stimulation and also in terms of career pattern. People would have looked at that and said, "Oh a DPO, he's never been a PAO." But, it turned out to be the period that the wall fell and lots of stuff was going on and it was a very interesting and rewarding time and again I was fortunate to have a couple of really great bosses to work for.

Q: Who was ambassador and PAO?

RUEDY: The ambassador when I got there was Richard Burt and he and the PAO frankly didn't get along all that well. The PAO was Terry Catherman and Richard Burt was very bright and young and engaged and involved and all over the place. Terry Catherman was also very bright and dynamic and interesting and a good, good guy, a very senior officer who had been in the Foreign Service for something like 30 years and the personal chemistry just wasn't there very much. But, Terry Catherman was a great guy to work for and he was mercurial some times and dynamic, very, very, very smart and a good, good guy to work for. Terry had come to Germany initially I think right after the war and he was the BPAO in Heidelberg or in Frankfurt and he was kind of a charter member of the German club. He had been there from the very beginning, spoke absolutely fluent German and was just a very smart and cagey guy and he would work some of these issues on RIAS and stuff like that. I would go into meetings with him and I would think, my God, how are we ever going to come out right on this one here. We would talk and chat and work it through and Terry would negotiate with the Germans and have a great rapport and he just really clicked.

Anyway, Richard Burt left then and was replaced by Vernon Walters. Richard Burt was quite a young man and had that reputation in Germany as being a bright, dynamic young man and was replaced by Vernon Walters who had been everywhere and done everything. He had come to Germany, I don't know maybe even been in Germany before World War II, I don't know but had traveled with Averell Harriman to the Ruhr. He had seen the little flowers in the vase in the German ruins and figured if these people are putting up flowers, this country has prospects even though everything is awful. Anyway he was a very, very experienced and wonderful gentleman, really a perfect person to have in Germany at the time and he and Terry got along beautifully. I think the two of them got along very well, which made for a good dynamic.

Q: Well when you arrived there what was on your plate?

RUEDY: RIAS, RIAS television and I thought my God, I finally left all these damn memos and briefing papers and Director Wick's rages and dynamism behind, gone on to the War College and here I am the first thing on my plate getting back to Bonn was RIAS again. We were then in the process of getting from here to there, getting RIAS on the air. There was some big problem practically my first day on the job, or my first week on the job and Terry Catherman asked me to look into it. I looked into it and I came up with some half-baked analysis for Terry and Terry looked at that and said, "No, this won't do." He really called me on it and I thought I'd really screwed up and I had, I forget what the issue was but I hadn't handled it very well and Terry was perfectly right to call me on the carpet for it. But things got sorted out and I worked I think very well with Terry. The two of us were never...we were friends and I had tremendous respect for him and I think he liked my work also but I don't know that we were kindred spirit types but I found it very rewarding to work with Terry.

Q: What was the point of RIAS television?

RUEDY: To reach a wider audience in East Germany and in Berlin as well and there again there were all kinds of intersecting political agendas. I think for some of the Germans that were involved in RIAS television they were interested in reaching West Berliners who voted. I think on the American side we were interested in reaching East Germans who were getting the message from Sender Fries Berlin and other West German television channels but a feeling that we ought to be able to reach them with an American voice and an American perspective as well. So I think we on the American side saw the primary target audience for RIAS television as the East German public around East Berlin and around the city of Berlin. I think some of the Germans were involved in it, its all that audience too but also saw an audience of Germans who voted and some interest also in broadcasting RIAS television to areas in the Federal Republic and you know how that played out, there were all kinds of concerns.

Q: What would we broadcast? I mean what was the plan to broadcast?

RUEDY: News and features, documentaries. There was a lot of discussion about what will RIAS carry that isn't being carried now and Sender Fries Berlin and who actually is the audience for RIAS. Those were all interesting questions and important questions but by that time I think that RIAS had a political dynamic that was separate from that. Director Wick wanted it, the administration wanted it, and there were people in the German government who very much wanted it so there was a momentum in that sense behind it.

Q: How did Walters feel about it?

RUEDY: Walters was onboard with it and I think by the time Walters came in there were lots and lots of other things going on with German and with the situation in Berlin so RIAS continued to be important but it wasn't the sort of lightening rod of concern that it had been for a while. I remember Director Wick came over and met with, oh what was her name, the Minister for Inner German Affairs, who was our "gespracht" partner on matters having to do with Berlin. They were talking about RIAS and German sensitivities toward RIAS. The Germans had political issues with it as well, the American role in Berlin and what the American profile should be in Berlin. So, there was lots and lots of back and forth.

Q: By the time you came back in '87 you left in '84 did you sense any change in German attitudes, I mean for one thing there is the SS20 Pershing sort of thing, did that sort of thing calm down?

RUEDY: Yeah it had calmed down. It was still an issue, I don't remember now exactly the timeline in one thing or another but those immediate issues had calmed down. Let's see '87, Reagan was still in power; we were transiting to the Bush administration, all that kind of thing. I think Bush was a good deal more understandable in terms of German political culture than Reagan had been. I think that they felt more comfortable; I think they felt that some of the ideological edge was gone but, of course, we had the Gulf War and that was a big, big deal for Germans. I think the Germans did support us but the fact of going to war over Kuwait and actually having begun to shoot that was something that for young Germans was a big, big stretch. The idea of actually going to war, of actually using the weapons, there was a lot of concern in Germany and I think it was that emotional sense of actually the coalition becoming engaged in violence, force of arms being required to settle this issue. There were peace demonstrations and concern among Germans, lots of concern among Germans when the run up came toward the war. Baker in this very dramatic I think last ditch effort with the Iraqis to avoid actually launching the first air attacks and stuff like that, that was a big deal for the Germans. What was it? Once the shooting actually started there was actually an attack on the embassy and this was I think some automatic weapons fire, AK-47 fire, from across the Rhine River into the embassy in Bonn. What was it? Our press section was hit and it blew up a computer and a bunch of stuff like that. So, it was a difficult period.

I remember talking to some youth groups, young political groups in Germany about how there is solidarity. This was an invasion of Kuwait by violence and every step has been taken. We've done everything possible but now it has gotten to the point where if there is no alternative what are you going to do? You can't just let this aggression stand. But the whole notion of resorting to armed force was something that the Germans found difficult, difficult, difficult to accept.

Q: Well turning to the Berlin situation, up until I guess the late summer of '89 were there any bells beginning to ring about what was happening there? How did it evolve, how did our embassy evolve?

REUDY: The bells rang very slowly. Vernon Walters created something of a stir when he first arrived in Germany. During an initial meeting with the press he was asked a fairly innocuous question, which had to do with can you imagine of Germany ever being united again, or unification happening. Walters answered again very diplomatically that "Yes, he could imagine Germany being reunited at some point in the future. This caused a great hue and cry in the German press because some of the Germans thought that it was really stirring the pot and creating instability and a feeling that we were pushing the GDR government. That this was awakening a lot of ghosts which they didn't want to awaken, that it was being provocative as far as the East, as far as the Soviet Union as far as the GDR was concerned. They feared that it was provocative and the text of the statement then we put out there was much hue and cry about the American ambassador talking about Germany being reunified. But Walters answered the question very diplomatically and there it was. But it indicates, I think, how far off the scope that thought was at the time. German unification, people just didn't think in those terms. I forget exactly when Walters came to Bonn as ambassador.

Q: Did you all get him to clarify what he meant or anything like that?

RUEDY: He did it very as I say diplomatically. I think he handled it very well. It was a little tempest in a teapot but it indicates what a hot button issue German unification was. I forget exactly what the clarification was but it was to the effect that, 'Yes, one could imagine or who knew under what circumstances or you know how history would unfold, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Q: But in a way it was indicated in the German society at that time that they were basically quite happy with the way things were, don't mess around with it.

RUEDY: Very much a feeling of don't mess around with it and thoughts of German unification being provocative and being destabilizing. I think people felt content with the situation as is, a prosperous and secure Federal Republic and people didn't really worry too much about unification with the East.

Q: Well then what happened with, as events began to unfold or you know Hungary and Czechoslovakia and all of that?

RUEDY: Gorbachev made an initial visit to Bonn, as I recall and there was a good deal of concern on the American side that Gorbachev was charming the Germans. That the Gorbachev charm offensive had the danger of splitting NATO or splitting Germany off from solidarity with the alliance and solidarity with the United States. There was a good deal of concern about that.

Q: Gorbymania.

RUEDY: Gorbymania, exactly, exactly. So there was some concern in the embassy and in the American official community in general, folks that were concerned about Germany and the NATO Alliance, that if Gorbachev succeeded what would that mean for the United States and lots of sympathy for Gorbachev among Germans. The Germans I think saw Gorbachev as a breath of fresh air. Who knows what might be possible with this leader of the Soviet Union: a whole new relationship and that concerned people in Germany as well as in the United States. Gorbymania, exactly.

I have a little bit of a different take on the collapse of the GDR than maybe some people do. I think the demonstrations in Leipzig and Dresden were all very, very important but I think what was really going on and what the handwriting on the wall clearly was. It took a while but not that long to sink in, but when people in the GDR began sensing an opening to the West and the cutting of the barbed wire between Austria and Hungary was on German television. People thought, oh yeah, great between Hungary and Austria now they are cutting the barbed wire, and the Iron Curtain is coming down and tensions are being relaxed. They are not looking across one another at gun barrels anymore but the Austrians are neutral. The Hungarians have always been the more liberal members of the Warsaw Pact so this is not so terribly, terribly unusual. This is a good thing, OK.

I think among East Germans they looked at that and saw something of a different message. They saw the Iron Curtain falling and they saw what they hadn't seen since the Berlin Wall went up in 1961 - an opportunity to get out. Gradually people, and these were the workers, these weren't the "intelligencia" (intelligence), they were the workers, they were ordinary citizens jumping in their "Trabant" (East German automobile) and driving across Czechoslovakia and driving into Hungary and driving into Austria. You had these, you know they are all in Austria, what the hell are we going to do with them, bring them back to Germany, long convoys and where are we going to put them in Germany and where are we going to resettle them. Then this became a stream, and it was clear that East Germans were going to take advantage of that to an ever-increasing numbers. There was pressure on the Hungarians, I think by the East German government, by the Soviet Union, who knows. I don't know to close the border but that wasn't going to work because once you had clipped the barbed wire you weren't going to put it up again. Then I think for a while wasn't there, I would have to look at the timeline on this, the border between the Czech Republic and Hungary was going to be closed and then Germans started piling up in huge, huge numbers at the West German embassy in Prague and there were negotiations to get them out. They just kept coming and then the East Germans figured out that what are we going to do? We can't very well close our border with the Czech Republic.

You had the peace demonstrations going on or the demonstrations for liberalization going on in Leipzig and in Dresden to some extent in Berlin as well. So there was just a lot of stuff going on. But, ultimately I think a realization on the part of the GDR government that without the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Brezhnev Doctrine is dead. Gorbachev had come to the 40th anniversary celebration of the German Democratic Republic and his words were widely cited: I think that history will punish those who don't keep up with things, the "geschichte" (present) was something "bestraften" (punish). I forget how this was reported in Germany but anyway this undercut the Honecker position. There was just a general momentum which the political powers that be in the GDR had lost control of. Ultimately the sovereignty of the GDR depended upon the realization that the Brezhnev Doctrine stood and ultimately any attempt to break away from the Warsaw Pact would be put down by force of arms. Well, when it dawned on people that that was no longer the case, the place just fell of its own weight. First of all, the working class streaming out in their Trabants through Hungary into Austria, through to the Czech Republic wherever they could get out. They weren't just...they wanted to get out. Then on the part of the more liberal elements a feeling that there ought to be a more kinder, liberal, socialist Republic of Germany and then I think a feeling that well these people are leaving but maybe if we say something like, "In the future maybe you can get visas to travel and stuff" and of course...

Q: Orderly departure.

RUEDY: Orderly departure, yes, something like that. Everybody on this crazy night of what was it, November 11, it was a beautiful night in November with a full moon and unusually mild weather and the word was that there is going to be an opening. There will be possibilities of getting out, that this will change, masses of people going to the wall and nobody shooting anymore. It was just the end of it; it was just the end of it.

Q: At one point the guard just sort of shrugged his shoulders?

RUEDY: That's right, you can't stop it, this is just the way it is, yeah. There was just no stopping it.

Q: The whole world is collapsing around you and from the public affairs perspective what was happening as this was unfolding?

RUEDY: The events acquired a dynamic all of their own and things were moving very, very quickly. I remember on the day that the wall fell and all this electrifying news was all over the television and all over the radio I drove home from the embassy toward my apartment in Plittersdorf and picked up my dry cleaning on the way. I remember thinking that gee all of these great events are taking place but I still need some clean shirts and a clean suit. So I picked up my dry cleaning and at that point there was really, I mean watching it on television, just watching events unfold and as far as the press line or anything in Bonn I think we needed to be visible. We needed to be present but the great pronouncements were really coming out of Washington and coming out of the offices in the Federal Republic. We, I think, needed to be cautious about getting in the way, making lots of pronouncements, saying lots of stuff. I mean it wasn't up to the embassy at that point to make a lot of comments.

Q: One of the great points of this Bush I diplomacy with Baker was this whole episode of how it was treated. That it was not turned into a political rally of gee we won another, this was not a flag waving triumphalism exercise. Keeping a fairly low key there which was...from a political type this must...I mean again I'm talking about American political types, this must have been pretty hard not to claim we won, we won?

RUEDY: I agree and I think that the way it was handled in Bonn was very, very good. There was the wisdom and that's exactly the word that I want to use, the wisdom of Ambassador Walters was key because of Walters being this very sovereign presence. He had been everywhere, he had done everything, knew everybody. I think his presence was sort of a calming thing. The impression of the German public was here is somebody who knows what he is doing. He is a statesman, he has been around for a while, he knows what he is doing. I remember at a staff meeting Walters said something, he was always quoting everybody I mean Walters knew everybody and he knew all the quotes. I think this was a quote from Napoleon, "There is nothing more urgent now than to wait."

Q: But did you feel that Walters, I mean was it pronounced that way or the way 'let's keep our mouths shut, don't go crawling'?

RUEDY: I don't recall hearing specific directions from him to that effect but that was definitely the tenor in the embassy that you needed to avoid great pronouncements or hysteria or cranking out press releases or doing this that or the other. The events had a dynamic and that dynamic was in the right direction and it was difficult to know exactly where things were going to go or how things were going to wind up but there was no violence. I mean this could have had I think horrible consequences. We were terribly, terribly fortunate. I think some of that was just good luck the way things played out.

Q: I've heard people say that the whole Honecker thing had been so consumed with making this 30th anniversary such a big deal that he kind of ignored all of this stuff that was going around.

RUEDY: Yes, he did.

Q: He didn't want to stir things up.

RUEDY: I think the Honaker regime; they were just incapable of changing. They were just incapable of changing the party line. This was just the way it was so they approached it with blinders and in refusing to recognize what was going on, refusing to recognize the inevitable, not really knowing what to do. Like I say, they couldn't very well close off the borders with the Czech Republic. I think maybe they leaned on the Czechs to do something but what could the Czechs do. The events had acquired a dynamic of their own. I think they were concerned about not provoking violence in places like Leipzig.

Q: You had the Sunday gathering.

RUEDY: Exactly, yes.

Q: With the church or...

RUEDY: Yeah, I forget the name of the church in Leipzig, but yeah. I think the people there were perhaps looking for a kinder, gentler GDR. You had all these demonstrations and Monday night marches or whatever they were. They were trying to keep all of that in check and really you know it didn't compute, it just didn't add up any more.

Q: Did you sense from your contacts in the Bonn government that they were over their heads or I mean how were they responding?

RUEDY: I don't think they were over their heads. I think and I don't know what they were saying to the GDR or you know what kind of communication was going on there. The GDR I think it was clear that any kind of resort to violence in connection with these demonstrations would be pretty catastrophic in terms of the relationship with Bonn and the relationship with the West so they, I think, were wanting to do everything possible to avoid violence. In violence they would clearly be out of step with the Soviet Union, with their great protector, with Gorbachev, with everything else so I think they just saw themselves on the GDR side as up a blind alley. I think the West Germans to the extent that I can gauge that, the government of the Federal Republic was being very restrained about not doing anything that would be provocative or that would bring about any kind of big cataclysm or whatever. They were really I think trying to handle it very, very carefully.

At the same time not saying anything that was anti the demonstrations or whatever. They were not provoking but not undermining, not undercutting either. They were, I think, treading a pretty fine line and treading it pretty well.

Q: Well, the public affairs must have been overwhelmed by news people coming to Berlin weren't they? I mean media from all over the world was there.

RUEDY: I wasn't in Berlin. We had a public affairs operation in Berlin and I worked with them but the correspondents coming to Berlin to cover the story would not I think have made a point of coming to the U.S. Mission in Berlin to do lots of interviews. I mean the story was out there on the street, it wasn't in sitting down with the American. I think Harry Gilmore was the guy who was there as the head of the U.S. mission in Berlin. Gilmore is certainly very cool and calm and exactly the kind of person who you wanted in a situation like that, so he really knew his way around and like I say I think the story spoke for itself.

Q: Well then in the aftermath of all this, I mean you almost immediately get caught in the Gulf War didn't you quite quickly after this.

RUEDY: Certainly the turmoil of the Gulf War was there also.

Q: What did that do with Germany, I mean, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. I mean you would think Germany becoming very much a pacifist type country.

RUEDY: And that pacifism I think was a factor in the way the German public regarded the events. I think there was first of all outrage about Kuwait. Clearly this was awful and there was no sympathy for Iraq, zero sympathy for Iraq on that score. A feeling that this was clearly terrible, clearly beyond the pale and a sense of disbelief that this could have happened and a sense of even greater disbelief that the west, the United States, allies would have to resort to a force of arms to reverse that aggression. So, no sympathy at all for Iraq but clearly a great hesitation, a great concern about going to war to change it and there I think that pacifist reflex played a very strong role. I think among the French, among the British, among the other people in the alliance that it was not so much a factor but for the Germans it very much was.

Q: The French normally reject, I mean they weighed in there.

RUEDY: Absolutely.

Q: Speaking of the French, did you sense a growing French-German relationship or was this more on the French side than on the German side?

RUEDY: No, during this period of time I think their relationship was a little bit frosty because the French certainly were not eager to see Germany move quickly toward unification, I think. The German public had that perception. I think among the German public there was a perception that the French were kind of moving toward the inevitable with a certain amount of reluctance, a certain amount of hesitation, a certain amount of trepidation. Maybe a feeling also among the public, I didn't hear this articulated officially at all, but I think among the public the French would just as soon not have this happen and if they saw an opportunity to slow it down or derail it or whatever they very well might. So, it was not a period I think when there was a great feeling that boy the French were really on our side on this.

Q: You were there until '91.

RUEDY: That's correct, yes.

Q: So how did things, I mean was it a different world you were dealing with after the fall of the wall and all?

RUEDY: Yes, things continued to evolve very rapidly and you know the whole discussion of Germany eventually becoming unified. I think Brandt made a statement that 'what belongs together will grow together', the feeling as a succession of governments took power in East Berlin you know what did all this mean. Would there continue to be a separate GDR? But events just kind of intervened. You had this movement. Kohl obviously saw this opportunity and took it. In retrospect, despite all of the second guessing and despite all of the concern about slow economic growth in Eastern German and high unemployment and the "Osties" (easterners) versus the "Westies" (westerners), I can imagine the way things worked out is not by far and away not the worst of alternatives, not the worst way it could have worked out.

In retrospect, I think that it worked out about as well as it could have, this quite rapid movement toward unification because certainly you had lots of instability and a period of potential turmoil in Eastern Germany. At the same time lots of things were happening inside the Warsaw Pact in Poland and in the Czech Republic and Hungary and everywhere else. So I think the course that events took turned out to be very fortuitous. The first of the talks about the unification of Germany took place in Bonn as I recall and Shevardnadze and Baker, they were all there. This was all a big, big deal and first you had this four power umbrella. It was all very complicated but I think American diplomacy, the whole Baker-Bush approach was ultimately a very measured and careful and wise movement. You had issues around Berlin settled and you had sovereignty turned over to the Germans in the context of German unification and it all worked out. You had a whole host of very, very difficult problems to deal with. The Soviets in East Germany still had about a half million Soviet troops.

Q: What were you all doing in public affairs? Was there much involvement or explaining what we were up to or was it business as usual?

RUEDY: Oh, it was a dynamic period. Business as usual but you had lots of visits by VIPs on the American side, secretary of state visits, press releases and support and so on. We were out too as I recall speaking and putting the American policy line forward but not getting in the way. This wasn't something that the Americans were forcing or pushing or whatever, but that we were working diligently and pragmatically and particularly in close coordination with the German side as events unfolded. I think we were concerned about not letting a lot of daylight appear or seem to appear between...we were not driving events toward unification but we weren't pulling the Germans back from it either. This was a culmination of long-standing American policy. I mean what was unfolding was no difference from what we had said from the very beginning we wanted to have happen. It was up to the Germans to make some of these decisions and to work out some of these major issues and certainly to work out the details. We were there not to dictate or not to impose or not to shape things according to our will but to have happen what we said we wanted from the very beginning, the whole concept of containment. This was all part and parcel of what we had been trying to do through the entire cold war period.

Q: Did you have any contact with your former first tour former job in western Germany?

RUEDY: Yes, very much so. This was interesting because Terry Catherman had left and during my last year there I was working for Cynthia Miller who was an outstanding PAO as well. She was absolutely terrific and she also had been PAO in East Berlin and I had been in East Berlin as APAO. You know the whole relationship between the embassy in Bonn and the Embassy in East Berlin was interesting. The U.S. Mission in West Berlin and quite how this was going to work, how we were going to divvy up responsibilities, how all of this was going to go. From Bonn we were pushing the envelope a little bit because the East German public affairs operation in East Berlin had been pretty tightly circumscribed. We didn't issue a lot of press releases or one thing or another because we couldn't and we felt now that things were changing we ought to really go for it. We were interested in making sure that our materials got out and our press releases got out. There was some issue about whether stuff to Leipzig ought to go out on U.S. Mission Berlin letterhead or Embassy Berlin letterhead. We said "OK, we don't care, do it on Embassy Berlin letterhead but we've got presence in West Berlin and we can crank this stuff out. We've got all this electronic capability and let it all happen and do it under the Embassy Berlin rubric because Leipzig is still part of the GDR. That's all OK but just do it, let it go. Let's get out to those places, let's get involved, let's reach out, clearly the situation is different now than it was a month ago and let's take advantage of that from the public affairs aspect." We sometimes felt that our colleagues in East Berlin were perhaps more conscious of bureaucratic turf than we would have liked but they had their perspective and we had ours, so what are you going to do?

Q: By the time you left there unification had taken place?

RUEDY: Yes, unification had taken place. We did lots of organizing and reorganizing. Public affairs outreach to the former GDR became a big, big issue for us. We were interested in using our IV allocation to bring lots of people over from the former GDR and doing lots of distribution in that part of the new "Bundeslande" (Federal States). We organized our public affairs effort. We had a very bright, outstanding person who was assigned to the American embassy in the GDR who was going to become a cultural attaché; they were going to establish a cultural attaché position in the GDR. As things imploded by the time she was ready to come to Berlin, there was no more GDR to be cultural attaché to so she was the BPAO in, we assigned her to be BPAO in Leipzig. We were going to open an America House in Leipzig. She had responsibility for finding a building in Leipzig where we could open an America House and do a bunch of this stuff. The BPAO in Hamburg and the BPAO in Hanover we decided, just for the sake of coverage, to ask them to cover Magdeburg and to cover some of the other important cities in the northern part of the GDR. We were busy redrawing the map and getting people new responsibilities and putting lots and lots of emphasis on outreach to what we called the new "Bundeslande".

For me it was great because here it was the possibility to get back to some of these places I thought I would never visit again by going to Leipzig, going to Dresden and going to some of these other places, Magdeburg and so on. Just getting a sense of what we ought to do there by way of a field operation, what we could do and you know just meeting with people. It was wonderful; it was a great way to end the tour.

Q: Was there any feeling that you know you were beginning to expand your operations into the new lands and beyond there that the West German government now the Federal government for the whole place was sort of saying 'you are messing around in our turf and don't get too active sort of thing?

RUEDY: No, no I never had that sense. They welcomed our presence. We were the foreign country after all, we were the Americans so I don't think that there was any sense of competing for influence in the GDR. We wanted to avoid that too for the West Germans. I think in the waning days of the GDR this was something that we watched very carefully as well. We didn't want to seem to be propping up or lending more credibility to the GDR than they deserved. It was a dynamic situation; we didn't quite know whether they were in free-fall or not but if they were in free-fall we didn't want to be seen as propping them up or giving them credibility. There were a couple of instances, I forget, I think Baker talked to one of the interim GDR leaders in Potsdam or something like that, it didn't amount to a whole lot. I forget who recommended what to whom but in retrospect it was not a big deal, but there was some discussion about whether it was really appropriate for the American secretary of state to meet with this rump-state GDR leader when we had been stiff-arming Honecker for years for very good reason. Now we were seeming to support the continued existence of a separate sovereign GDR. Like I said I would have to look at the time line of that again because it was a rather busy period when lots of stuff was going on in very quick succession. I think the overall arch of American policy was pretty clear and that was to not get in the way of what was happening in terms of inner-German relations and inner-German affairs and to do what we had said we were going to do from the very beginning, support a reunified Germany at some point in time on German terms.

Q: Well then in '91 you left?

RUEDY: Yes I did.

Q: And where did you go?

RUEDY: I came back to Washington and went to a great assignment in the bureau of education and cultural affairs as deputy chief of the Fulbright program. I did continue to be involved with Germany because Germany was at that point the largest Fulbright program that we had anywhere thanks in large part, thanks completely to the tremendous support that the Fulbright program got from the German government. A generation of Germans had grown to cherish and love the German Fulbright program and as we withdrew support for it the Germans increased their support. So the binational Fulbright program when I left Germany and went to this office I think was about \$4 million which made it by far the largest program and \$3 million of that was German money and we wouldn't have been continuing to kick in a \$1 million but the Germans kind of shamed us by upping their anti so we kept ours at a larger level than I think we otherwise would have.

Q: You were there from '91 to when?

RUEDY: Let's see, I was there for three years altogether, from '91 to '94.

Q: Was the Fulbright program beginning to fade away in other places or not?

RUEDY: Yeah, it was. It had been fading away from a lot of places unfortunately for a lack of financial support from the American side. It was a period when I think foreign countries welcomed the Fulbright program; many foreign countries, partner countries, contributed to the Fulbright program in a substantial way. It was very much a binational program with binational commissions and wonderful binational directors in many of the countries. So it really was, I think, unique among academic exchange programs that I know of, a binational effort between us and the Brazilians or between us and the Hungarians, between us and the Spanish and it being a binational commission with a binational board of directors, and a binational director. But, unfortunately, American support for it was always very, very difficult. We worked very hard to keep up the American side of the bargain, but it was tough especially in a period when appropriations were going down, the Cold War had been won. There was not great fundamental enthusiasm on the Hill from the geo-political standpoint for maintaining this program. There were lots of people who liked it, I mean nobody disliked Fulbright, everybody thought it was a great program but people were looking for peace dividends and people were looking for budget cuts and why are you doing all of this binational stuff and the Cold War is over. We explained to people that the Fulbright program never was a Cold War program that it really always was a program to promote mutual understanding and the wonderful statement of purpose to the original Fulbright legislation in 1961 whatever and there was some support for Fulbright. I think we kept up a pretty good front but it was a difficult battle.

Q: Did you find that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of all those states out of the Soviet Union put additional burdens on the Fulbright program or how was that?

RUEDY: Yes it put additional burdens on the budget because the budget tended to be a very much zero sum situation. We did get some modest increases. We didn't really have a terribly dynamic leadership within USIA, this was not a Director Wick era. However much he might be criticized for lack of political finesse as I heard Director Wick say at one point, "I don't know that much about international politics but I know a lot about making a deal." He was good at that, give him credit, he was good at that and he was good at wringing out budget support for public diplomacy programs and he was good at playing the political game inside Washington. He was good at capitalizing on his direct relationship with the President and with Nancy and all that kind of thing. Later on I think the leadership in USIA was a lot less dynamic and it was a lot less forceful and it had a lot less credibility on capital Hill, or at the NSC or the White House. I think exchange programs suffered as a result, public diplomacy programs in general and academic exchange programs in particular suffered. We did have some support for these programs on the Hill and the Hill, I think, usually wound up giving the Fulbright program and other exchange programs more money than the administration and USIA leadership was willing to ask for. So we kind of kept body and soul together but yeah, there were demands and we were eager to satisfy them. We established Fulbright commissions with the Czech Republic, with Hungary, with Poland and they were all eager for large programs and we didn't have a whole lot of money but at least we got things going.

Q: Well then who was the director at the time?

RUEDY: Joseph Duffy. He came from the academic area and we had high hopes. I mean here was an academic type who was really going to go to bat for the Fulbright program. But there was not I don't think a lot of dynamism there frankly and I don't think that he had much credibility on the Hill. There were a couple of exchanges between Duffy and Senator Biden which indicated that there was just not a whole lot of connection there. We were beginning to work another angle and doing so quite successfully and that was the funding from the Freedom Support Act. A large amount of money was coming into the AID (Agency for International Development) budget for programs to support the activities in the former Soviet Union. There were some very, very sharp people in that Freedom Support Act office. I think they saw the importance of things like academic exchange programs and revamping the university structure in those countries. They saw in programs like Fulbright and other academic programs that were run by USIA programs also in my office to train graduate students and stuff like that, they saw that as a good place to put their money. So we began getting fairly large amounts of money from the Freedom Support Act to support Fulbright clone type programs basically putting programs on the Fulbright model. We would vociferously deny this but we were often asked whether we weren't using Freedom Support Act money to support programs that USIA base funding should be supporting. I mean the short answer was, yes, we were doing that because the base budget simply wasn't there. We were getting a fair amount of money from the Freedom Support Act to do these things. Shouldn't we be taking money from the budget in Germany and in France and in Spain and diverting it to Kazakhstan and maybe I suppose we should have but we needed programs in Germany and Spain and the UK as well. They were stripped down to bare bones also and stripping them even further wouldn't...so there was a lot of sort of maybe slight of hand. But we were able to keep basic programs going in most of the places where we needed basic programs and we were able to ramp up programs in the countries of the former Soviet Union as well, mostly thanks to Freedom Support Act money. The people who were running the Freedom Support Act saw that what we had been doing for years under the Fulbright program, bringing over graduate students and training junior faculty, were exactly what they ought to be doing to promote democratization and free market development in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Q: In a way there had to be the ones that had been going in the Soviet Union for example as I recall they were quite heavily into the scientific field and had been going to the United States.

RUEDY: They had been. After the breakup of the Soviet Union all of those concerns about sending over physicists and chemists kind of subsided. We were able really to do much more on our own instead of negotiating everything between the American embassy or between Washington and under the umbrella of a cultural agreement. We would explain that in countries where we had long-standing programs and great cultural relations, we never had cultural agreements and just let things happen and let people exchange and let people go back and forth. We've got these tremendous programs and for the most part those governments did not exercise the kind of veto power they did in the old Soviet era. There were some rumblings about establishing cultural agreements but the last thing that we wanted were these carefully negotiated cultural agreements, which really circumscribed what we were able to do. In a number of places we came up with over-arching statements of principals that we were all for academic exchange and all kinds of exchange, the more the merrier. We would try to assist in that rather than limiting it and not be a funnel for these kinds of things anymore, being the tight end of the funnel where things got watched but just to expedite and to free up stuff and the more the better.

Q: Well then you left...how about Duffy, did he pay much attention to what you were doing. Did you feel his hand very much?

RUEDY: Not really no, no, on Fulbright, no. He would as I recall give a speech if that's what it amounted to but I didn't get the sense of overwhelming interest.

Q: I've talked to people who were there around that time and the feeling about Duffy as being not, as you say, not dynamic or even really not very interested and sort of looking like what are we doing.

RUEDY: Yes it was a sad period for USIA because I think we were getting hammered on the budget year after year and we were looking for leadership and looking for somebody to articulate a mission and that certainly could have been done but I don't think it was coming out of the leadership that we had at the time.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. You left there in '95 or when was it?

RUEDY: I left there in '94 and went into a year of Russian language training and then went to the American embassy in Moscow from '95-'97.

Q: OK we will pick that up then.

Today is the 10th of May 2005. Ralph how did you find Russian?

RUEDY: I found Russian difficult and I knew it would be. I'm not a particularly gifted linguist. I learned German the easy way from my grandfather and my parents growing up but Russian was something else again. I knew that I wasn't the gifted language student because I had struggled with Vietnamese before going to Vietnam in the Navy and then later had some training in Persian and Farsi as well before going to Iran, just a basic courtesy level but those experiences let me know that language came more easily to other people sometimes than it did to me.

Q: How old were you when you were taking this?

RUEDY: Oh my, I was in my fifties. I was in my mid-fifties.

Q: You are a little bit late, as you are supposed to learn it before you hit twenty.

RUEDY: That's absolutely right. But I came to the assignment in Russia more or less as serendipity because my wife is a Foreign Service officer as well and we were looking around for tandem assignments to go overseas. Tandem assignments are very difficult to find and they are generally available at larger embassies and of course Rome and Paris and London are a little bit more difficult to get. There was nothing available at any of those places but the personnel list in Moscow indicated two appropriate openings. We bid on them and off we went. I must admit I had no particular interest in studying Russian or in Russian history or things Russian. I had never served in that part of the world so I didn't really know what to expect. My wife had had some background. She had had some Russian language in college and also studied Russian literature and Russian history and found that all very interesting so I thought well I'll do my best and off we will go to Moscow and do Russian language. I found Russian language tough but you take the Woody Hayes approach to language learning. You hit it each morning and a cloud of dust and three yards and you hope you get a first down and make it to the next step and that's what happened. I did my year of Russian language and it was tough but I came out of it with a 3-3 and I suppose there are 3-3s and there are 3-3s. In some cases one clears the high bar elegantly and in other cases one makes it to the top and the bar is jiggling and you wind up in the dust taking a deep breath and maybe I fell into the latter category.

Q: Well Ralph you went to Moscow, you were there again from when to when?

RUEDY: I was there from '95-'97. I got there in July approximately of '95 and left there in July of '97.

Q: What was your position?

RUEDY: I was deputy public affairs officer and we had a very large USIS operation, certainly the largest in the world. We had quite large programs thanks to the Freedom Support Act. By this time USIA funding and USIA leadership and USIA everything was pretty much in tatters. But, in that part of the world, thanks to the Freedom Support Act, we had very, very large programs, which relied on sort of clones of programs that USIA had been doing successfully for years. We had a very large program for example to bring graduate students to the United States to study law, business administration, economics and government.

Q: This is brand new because prior to that they had all gone over to study science.

RUEDY: That is correct, they had wanted to study science and selected only people that were absolutely reliable and all the rest of it. Here we basically did our own selection, we ran our own selection process working with a couple of really good NGOs (non-governmental organizations) Acter and IREX who had lots of experience in that part of the world. Anyway, we conducted these programs and they were frankly clones of the Fulbright graduate program, the same basic mechanisms, the same basic approach, the same basic selection criteria. We got some really, really good people, bright young people that would come to the States for a year and in many cases in that year earn a masters degree. They just did really well, spoke good English and all the rest of it.

Q: It must have been an exciting time, you had not been an old Soviet hand but I mean things had really just had been uncorked there. Could you describe kind of the working atmosphere?

RUEDY: It is absolutely true, uncorked is a good description because suddenly all kinds of things were possible. The Russians were friendly and interested though some of the Russian officials were a little bit standoffish and some of them tended to be kind of stuck in the bureaucratic mechanism of the past. I remember one go-around that we had with the ministry of culture. They had perceived that the cultural agreement that we had signed way back in Soviet days had expired and the cultural agreements were very, very detailed lists of what they would do and what we would do. The cultural agreements tended actually to circumscribe reciprocal cultural activities, so we didn't really want a cultural agreement but they insisted on it. It expired and they needed a new one, it was just the way it was done. So we worked out not a cultural agreement but a statement of principles or something like that I think we called it. It basically called for just lots and lots of contact and the governments not getting in the way of that but encouraging it and working to facilitate it whenever possible, that is what we were trying to do.

Q: How about the people who were working for the embassy, the Russians, for your thing, how did you find that?

RUEDY: We had terrific Russian employees and I think that was the mainstay of our capacity in Russia. We had a good group of Foreign Service officers. It was still USIS at that point, a large USIS operation and I think we had 14, 15 officers, 15 Americans all together and probably 40 or 50 Russian employees. The Russian employees were outstanding; some of them had master's degrees and some had experience in the United States but not in all the cases. But, I think they also shared a commitment really to engagement with the West and engagement with the United States. They were interested in the U.S. and they felt as good Russians it was important for them to do this. So, they were outstanding, very energetic, great cooperation and that went from everybody from the senior cultural people to the drivers some of whom spoke a little bit of English, many of whom didn't but they were just all a joy to work with, they were just great folks to work with.

Q: You were working on the cultural side is that right?

RUEDY: I was working on both the press and the cultural side. The PAO who was Paul Smith my first year and Bob Gosende the second year. I was chief operating officer or something like that. So, I was the person that was making the trains run on time or trying to within that big organization. I perhaps put it into too glossy terms but I tried to get out as much as possible as well and participate in programs and have lots and lots of contact with Russians. Basically my job was to keep the operation running and to worry about things like budgets and country plans which we were still doing and mission program plans and pulling all that kind of stuff together and making sure that the mail from Washington got answered. I made sure that the reporting that we were supposed to be doing on our exchange programs and all that stuff was getting done so it was a good job, I enjoyed it.

Q: What about did you have much contact one way or the other with the Russian universities?

RUEDY: Yes, yes we did. That was a big area that we were interested in and concerned about and most of that went to the cultural attaché^{1/2}. Rosemary DiCarlo was cultural attaché^{1/2} and she is an old Soviet hand, really outstanding, excellent Russian, had a PhD. in Russian literature or Russian art, really a strong background. Some of the people in the section in USIS did. Paul Smith who was my boss as PAO had excellent Russian, which he learned in the army and later on, had served in exhibits in the old Soviet Union, traveling exhibits and all that stuff so he really knew the territory. As I say, great people to work with and learn from. I felt a little bit of an outsider to that Soviet club but I found the assignment tremendously, tremendously rewarding. I had talked about how I looked at going to Russia and Russian language with a little bit of trepidation, who needs this at this point in my career but just getting over there the culture was so immensely rich and Russian art and Russian literature and Russian history and religion and everything else.

Q: In going to the universities, did you get the feeling that they were sort of restructuring themselves? I mean it had been the Soviet system and then all of a sudden things were opening up and things were based on a Marxist course. I can't think off anybody who would be less desired than a professor of Marxist theory or something like that.

RUEDY: I think some of the professors of Marxist theory were left out in the cold. Others in economics or people in other fields were looking around and seeing new possibilities and new opportunities. The younger ones I think shared in that excitement and the dynamism. There was a massive restructuring. I think the Russians, were just really excellent at muddling through. They would improvise, they would kind of figure out a way and they would make it work. I grew tremendously admiring of the way the Russians were able to cope, were able to do things and that certainly was called upon in the situation that existed in '95-'97. Universities had been teaching organizations with a heavily Marxist/Leninist outlook. Obviously they were teaching students to be good Marxist/Leninists. Serious research was conducted not by university professors but by people in the academy of sciences or the academy of arts, that is where the art or where the science or where the research got done. These organizations were massively funded by the old Soviet government as well. That funding was drying up so you had these old institutes and these wonderful 19th century buildings in Moscow, which were desperately improvising to keep body and soul together. A couple of the institutes I remember had rented space to American companies that were coming over. IBM (International Business Machines) and others would need space so they would rent office space in these prestigious old institute buildings and I had the impression of sort of the southern plantation or whatever now no longer prospering, renting out rooms in order to produce some cash flow to keep the place going.

Q: Tara has gone bed and breakfast.

RUEDY: Yes that's right, exactly. That applied especially in the arts. My daughter took trumpet lessons there from a guy that we got to know pretty well who was a world-class trumpet teacher. He was basically trying to keep his faculty and keep his organization going and the way he did that was to teach students who could pay him in marks or in dollars and then he also had pretty good German. He spoke no English but he had pretty good German so we communicated mostly in German. He then had all kinds of connections in Germany and basically would spend maybe half the year in Germany performing or doing stuff and I think earning enough money to keep the institute at the organization that he was attached to, going. He had a couple of really good students and the good students would find jobs in Germany or even in the United States, in one case, and you know one thing or another. But people were tremendously resourceful about doing stuff.

Q: Was it apparent that there were people who were being left out, one thinks of the pensioners, army personnel and all of that?

RUEDY: Very much so. We saw the pensioners, these little old ladies who would knit stuff and sell it in the subway or out on the streets when the temperature was ten or fifteen below zero. I remember one memorable sight. People were always selling stuff. I remember walking past one guy who was selling, what, three frozen fish and four beets he had laid out in front of him and that's what he was trying to sell. You had the feeling of tremendous want and need and real struggle on the part of a lot of people as well and your heart would go out to those people.

I worked with the Protestant Chaplaincy, my whole family did. The Protestant Chaplaincy had a wonderful program, soup kitchens basically, of providing a hot meal every day I think at a number of locations around Moscow. The people that came in were usually older people, pensioners who just didn't have any money and we would dish out a nice bowl of soup to them. It was a clean well lighted place where they could come and eat and they came by the hundreds. Some of these were old army veterans that were wearing their medals and stuff and you thought, man, these people have been there and done that and you had tremendous admiration for them but here they were kind of left high and dry when the world had changed, everything had changed. I had that strong feeling a lot. You would hear stories from people. I remember a college professor that I got to know. She told me that she had warned her elderly mother that the ruble is collapsing, take your money out of the bank account and buy stuff, buy stuff because it's not going to be worth anything. She had a pretty good savings, I don't recall the amount, but she said my mother this is just the way she was, she had the money in the account and that it earned three and four percent and that's the way it had always been and she couldn't get her mind wrapped around the idea that it wouldn't always be that way. So basically the money that she had saved in her old age within a period of weeks, months, went to where it wouldn't pay for a hamburger at the new McDonalds.

Q: Was there an effort on our part as we were doing this, this is a very difficult time obviously for the Russians to both be helpful and not to in a way rub their nose in their problems and this. Sort of avoid triumphantism?

RUEDY: Absolutely, and from the public affairs standpoint, from the public diplomacy standpoint we were acutely aware of that. We were acutely aware that this was not the time for crowing or it wasn't a time for humiliation or whatever. It was a time for a new start and I don't know, there are different theories on who won the Cold War and why. But it also, I think, represents a huge victory on the part of a new generation of Russian people and I think lots of younger knew that the old system was not working. The old system was not working and they probably did as much to get rid of it as anybody. I don't know, you can give lots of credit to Reaganomics and missile business and so on but I think lots of young Russians just realized that it had to change.

Q: Well basically the system itself collapsed so it was in a way, it wasn't the outside pressures as much as just the system ran out of steam.

RUEDY: I agree with you. A good friend of mine, an American who has done a lot of Russian watching said that he felt that basically the old system had continued to gain legitimacy for much longer than it could have or should have or earned that legitimacy by claiming the legacy of the victory of World War II. The Great Patriotic War had been such an absolutely draining and emotionally overwhelming experience for Russia. With 27 million dead all the rest...you would see that in the last few days with Putin still reviewing the troops on Red Square.

Q: The 60th anniversary.

RUEDY: The 60th anniversary victory...

Q: It's been all over our TV with President Bush and all the world leaders at Red Square.

RUEDY: Yeah, but this guy felt that the old Soviet system had gained legitimacy or continued to have a hold on the Russian people because of the searing experience of World War II which they had won. Then when that World War II generation, the people who had been through that and had been branded with this patriotism of the great patriotic war, when that generation was replaced by a new generation who had that from the history books but not from personal experience, this generation was willing to look at the Soviet system and say the hell with it, this system is not working, this system is not doing anything. It's not producing for me and my family and it's not producing anything for my country.

Q: Did you get any...sort of the public affairs side, there must have been quite a revolution going on there especially about the media, the international, I mean all of that?

RUEDY: Oh yeah. That was going great guns and new newspapers were being founded and all kinds of stuff was going on. It was a period when things were pretty, well really open. It was the period too when this was sort of below my radar screen one had a sense that it was going on but this was a time when resources were being sold off, privatization, it was a period when fortunes were being made overnight.

Q: The robber barons and the Russian mafia as it was called.

RUEDY: The robber barons. When a guy who was really, really fast on his feet and really in touch with things could wind up controlling half the worlds tin supply if you knew what you were doing and if you were willing to do whatever you needed to do to get there. It was an amazing period, an amazing era and I think I don't know, freedom of the press, freedom of speech all that stuff, I mean in the abstract, yeah, absolutely important I have no doubt about that.

A lot of media stuff was being done also to provide mouthpieces. I think there was also a kind of overhang of Marxist era, how you did things under the Marxist system because agitprop and making people aware. I mean this is a big thing for a doctrinaire Marxist and control of the media and shaping public opinion this is important. I think some of the people who made fortunes very quickly also realized that in order to hold onto those fortunes they had to make their voices heard. They had to, not propaganda in a negative sense, but they couldn't just stand by and sit on their money. They had to be engaged, they had to be involved and they had to help create political conditions that would nurture the kinds of things that they were involved in, put it that way. So people that were organizing free media, I mean well it's never quite as idealistic I suppose as one projects. These weren't John Peter Zenger types who were interested in free speech in the abstract. These were people with very definite political opinions that they wanted to put out there. I don't know, maybe part of the read on Putin is an attempt to roll back some of that and overreacting to it. I don't approve of a lot of what Putin's been doing in the last year or two years, but I think when Putin came to power he maybe had a sense of rolling back some of what he saw as the power that had accumulated in private hands rather than in the government hands.

I was there for the big election, in '96 I think it was, when there was much concern about the communists coming back and Yeltsin being tossed out or support for him being much reduced because of the economic conditions we've talked about. There was general disgust and distrust of the privatization process and a feeling among many people that things had gone fundamentally off the rails so there was real concern that the communists would come back. I think in the mythology that Putin and others maybe bought into it was the media and the media portrayal of Yeltsin during that very pivotal election campaign that really produced their mindset that the media won it for Yeltsin. The media are the folks that kept the communists from coming back and out of that grew maybe an exaggerated sense of the role that the media played in shaping public opinion and voter opinion in the new Russia. There did, I think, emerge this myth that it was the way the media strongly backed the Yeltsin camp and the "liberals" or "reformers" or "free market economic types" that kept the communists from making a comeback in that crucial election.

Q: Did you sense that the new cliquey informed people were getting their news from CNN (Cable News Network) and from BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and just other news sources and the Internet? Was the new generation coming in that was well plugged into the world net as they call it?

RUEDY: Yes, yeah, Russians are very smart and you had one hundred percent literacy. One of the things that the communists obviously did was to have this excellent educational system that reached down to everybody. Young people were very literate and very plugged in and very internationally minded. I'm a real novice coming into this but the old westernizer versus the Russophile thing that the Russian history 101 sort of starts with I think you felt that yeah this was very true. On the one hand the great sense of reaching out and being international and reaching out to the international community and being Europeans and being part of the world. On the other hand a sense of Russia's special place and Russia as a special mission, Russia with a special soul, Russia with a special mentality, something that made Russians special. I think there was that kind of thing going on even among young people who were defining the new Russianness, what it meant to be Russian in the post-Soviet period. They were plugged in internationally and at the same time I think they saw themselves as wanting to find, wanting to forge a separate, unique Russian way and again I think that's what is going on now with Russia today.

Q: With Putin.

RUEDY: With Putin and with what is happening in Russia today.

Q: Well, you know one of the things about the Soviet Union and some of the other eastern European countries, particularly the Soviet Union is that all the news is about Moscow or St. Petersburg or all of that but you go 20 miles out of the Moscow limits and you are back in the 14th century where women are wearing yolks to carry their water. Did you get out, I mean, I'm not talking about the other cities but out in the countryside? What was happening there?

RUEDY: I didn't get out as much as I wanted to. One of the big emphases we made in public diplomacy in USIS was to expand from Moscow and St. Petersburg. We made particular efforts to do stuff outside of the two major cities where there had been some western contact. We established American corners, little mini-libraries. This was not a kind of thing that Washington in those days at USIA was in favor of. We had given up the outreach libraries, but in Russia, that is what you really needed. So we established these little American corners where there was a computer connection and that was major and also a small collection of books and things like that. Every once in a while we would try to get out and do a little program there, do a little speaker or a film or something like that. I forget how many American corners we established but we tried to, I think we had about a dozen or so. We had put a branch public affairs officer out in Vladivostok before I got there. I made it out to Vladivostok a couple of times, up to Khabarovsk and places out there a little bit in the Russian far east. One thing that the PAO and I felt strongly about was the importance of putting a branch public affairs officer in Ekaterinburg as well. We had had a small consulate there but no public affairs...

Q: Sverdlovsk.

RUEDY: Sverdlovsk, in the Urals. So anyway, we wanted to put a branch public affairs officer at the very small consulate in Ekaterinburg. Washington fought us tooth and nail on that because this is a period of downsizing and USIA is getting more budget cuts and so on. But we finally got a BPAO out there. I think we had to give up a position in Moscow and give up two positions in St. Petersburg but we did get a BPAO out in Ekaterinburg. The people that we had as BPAOs in all of the cities were excellent, fluent Russian speakers and they got out and about a lot. So we were doing the kind of outreach to the Russian hinterland that we needed to do. I got out there as much as I could but in general we encouraged the staff to travel. We even set more or less arbitrarily limits that of the people that go on Muskie grants this year only x-percentage can be from Moscow and St. Petersburg. You got to get people from the provincial universities and you've got to get people from here, there and everywhere. We were as I say pretty successful doing that.

Q: What was your impression of places like Khaba...I just can't pronounce it.

RUEDY: Khabarovsk.

Q: Khabarovsk and of Vladivostok when you went out there?

RUEDY: Conditions out there were a lot worse than in Moscow. A lot was going on in Moscow and St. Petersburg but those other places were struggling. We were working pretty closely with AID and AID had a pretty good program where they would identify areas where the local administration was particularly amenable to change and reform and doing things. Instead of putting a little bit here and a little bit there across this vast Russian region you would pick out particular cities or particular regions that showed promise. The idea was that you would get something going there and that would create a spark and that worked I think in places like Saratov and Nizhny Novgorod and Novgorod near St. Petersburg was another site that was picked out for that. Those things worked and you know you sensed that stuff was happening. Other places where the provincial authority, the local authority was backward leaning or corrupt or just not with it very much things just weren't happening. That applied certainly in Vladivostok. There was always talk about Vladivostok becoming this great place on the Pacific, and you got out there and you thought this is not doing too well. Khabarovsk on the other hand seemed to be doing better, interesting. Some of those places had been closed cities and no westerner had gotten into places like Nizhny Novgorod because you were right on the Volga. I think they were building submarines in Nizhny Novgorod somebody told me and certainly Vladivostok, the big Pacific port, was another place that was closed to westerners.

Q: I've seen pictures showing the fleet just rusting away. In a way it was very sad, I've always admired Russian naval architecture.

RUEDY: For me it was interesting because in Vladivostok out there just on the hill below the consulate were a couple of Russian cruisers, Russian destroyers that were just sitting there. They hadn't gotten underway in years and they probably couldn't get them underway now. These were the kinds of ships when I was an Ensign in the United States Navy serving on board my destroyer in the Mediterranean guarding...on the screen around the carrier we would be looking through our binoculars at those guys looking with their binoculars at us. They were at that time making a big effort to mount a naval presence in the Mediterranean and the Pacific and everywhere. They were there and now they were tied up along the rusty pier in Vladivostok and like I say I don't think you could get up steam in those ships any more.

Q: What about Americans in Russia, exchange professors, not tourists but others who were coming with NGOs and all that. What was your impression of their impact?

RUEDY: Generally speaking very, very positive. We had a number of people who were working with NGOs that were helping to administer our exchange programs. They call it American Councils because they continue to be active in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Of course if you are a teacher of Russian in Ukraine or a teacher of Russian in Kazakhstan that doesn't win you many points so they had kind of reinvented themselves and done that very successfully. But Actor had a lot of young people in different locations across Russia. They were helping us open our American corners and recruiting for our Muskie program and youth exchange programs. IREX had people out in the field. The American Peace Corps was active. We had a number of Peace Corps volunteers and others, academic types. There were a couple of universities that were trying to launch university partnerships with different Russian universities. I was in general impressed with the effort that they were making and also the success that they were having and the reception that they got among the Russians. I was surprised there wasn't more of a residue of suspicion among the Russians but the Russians were pretty open to it.

Q: I've always felt that the Russians and the Americans really have quite dissimilar but at the same time kind of similar histories. As types they seem to get along pretty well wouldn't you say?

RUEDY: I've often thought of that: that maybe both the Russians and the Americans define ourselves in terms of the great centers of European culture, but not really. We feel that we have a separate, unique identity and a unique dynamism and an energy and a soul or whatever that these Europeans don't have any more.

Q: Europe is all cramped together you know.

RUEDY: That is right.

Q: We've got this big open space to keep moving.

RUEDY: Exactly and the Russians have the same mentality. I think at the same time the Russians, who were they, the Narodniki or whatever were talking about our unique separate...

Q: These were the people during the beginning of the 20th century who went out to the people.

RUEDY: At the same time they were making a plea for own separate Russian identity and literature and culture. You had guys like Ralph Waldo Emerson saying that here in the United States we have to create an American literature, which is separate from European literature. We are a worthy culture on our own and we have an American music to find our way to and an American way of doing things. So there is that identity and the Russians would often cite that.

Q: Did you see much impact with George Soros and his organization?

RUEDY: I did yes. Soros was doing good things and we would work with them. I don't have enough knowledge to really speak to that with authority but the Open Society Institute was doing some good things and we were certainly trying to accomplish the same things. I did have the impression sometimes and I can't really cite any specifics here that the attention span was a little shorter than what needed to be done. The Open Society Institute would get very interested in this that or the other and pump money into it for a year or two but then pull back from it a little bit and I think that it required a commitment for the long haul, let's put it that way. But no they were doing good things, as were other organizations that were there. Even now through the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy, these were the people who sponsored the soup kitchens, I got to know a number of Canadian Mennonites who were working with the Mennonite communities in Siberia and they were doing good work too. It was not proselytizing or whatever but it was economic development. It was establishing agriculture, new basis for agriculture, agriculture prosperity and stuff like that. So there were lots of people doing good things.

Q: Well, one of its difficult nuts to crack in Russia would be the agriculture side. They destroyed the peasantry, had these collective farms which we sort of collectivized our agriculture all over the world too but these ones were not efficient producers and the transportation system stinks and you know the delivery system...did you get involved in this at all?

RUEDY: No, not really. I was interested in it because I grew up in Iowa in a little agricultural town. I remember talking to a bunch of people, economists and others that were involved in agriculture or people who are now English teachers or English professors who had grown up on a collective farm or their dad was the chief of the collective farm. But no, I agree with you that agriculture was an area that was pretty much of a disaster and required major restructuring. I don't really have much of a sense of how successful they were at going about that. We did bring some people over in agricultural economics but I can't really speak with very much knowledge about that.

Q: You mentioned it was a Protestant Chaplaincy and all. I was wondering whether there was a...problem is maybe not the right word but we have all these Christian groups and often very naïve and to my mind rather primitive types of not quite snake handlers but, I mean whatever you want to call to the far right or the far left of the Protestant religious spectrum, very fundamentalists and all that. Did you see any impact?

RUEDY: I didn't see much impact. I didn't have any contact with any of them. There were a few that passed through the Protestant Chaplaincy and you would get to meet them and chat. The Protestant Chaplaincy was interesting because it was non-denominational. The people running it were Presbyterians basically but they were retired and doing this for a couple of years. A lot of the people who came were Africans, African students actually who had come to Russia on scholarship back in the old Soviet days and they were going to study Marxism and go back to Ethiopia or wherever but were then kind of left high and dry. So there were some interesting cases along that line. Lots of third world types in general that would come to worship so their services were interesting, you got to meet some interesting people.

Q: Did you ever find yourself who were doing commands against the Russian Orthodox Church, which tends to be pretty conservative?

RUEDY: I didn't come up against it. I knew that the Russian Orthodox Church was not happy with proselytizing by American groups. Not many people who were involved with the Chaplaincy were Russians. Only a very few that were Russians. We had some interesting contacts actually with some people from the Russian Orthodox Church both informal and formal.

I remember once before Easter my daughter who speaks pretty good Russian and her sister were over at the Russian Orthodox Church that was directly across from the embassy compound in Moscow. During the whole Soviet period it was affectionately referred to as our Radiant Lady of Perpetual Watchfulness or something like that because it had been taken over by the KGB (State Security Committee). With the steeple there was an excellent capacity for listening in on what was going on at the embassy. The radiation stuff wasn't going on anymore but there was some speculation that that is where it was coming from or at least where some of it came from. But anyway, my daughter and her sister were over there before Easter and got into a conversation with a couple of the young priests and they gave them a guided tour of the church and said, "Here we are rebuilding, this all used to be electronics and stuff like that." They were very friendly and very forthcoming and in a number of other cases I would just wander into a church and get into a conversation with a Russian Orthodox clergy and they would be very friendly, approachable and have questions and I would have questions and we would have a good exchange to the extent that my language permitted.

Q: How about while you were there the security situation, one the old KGB residue, were they messing around and then just plain the security with criminality, was that a problem?

RUEDY: Embassy visitors were warned about it and one group that we were warned about particularly were what we called "street urchins," These were gypsy kids and groups of ten or fifteen or twenty of them would hit sometimes a westerner and it would all happen very quickly. The people would be stripped of purse and billfold and everything. One place where one felt particularly vulnerable were these long "perihouts", I think they were called, long passageways under these big wide Moscow streets because when you got into those there was no way out. You had the exit behind you and the exit way, way in front of you and in between you were in the middle of this long tunnel so there you were kind of vulnerable. I know some people who got hit by the street urchins and got roughed up a little bit and had their valuables stolen. There were a couple of occasions when I thought they were kind of looking to me and I would walk next to a wall. I had one of these umbrellas where you pushed the button and the umbrella thing comes out and I remember a couple of occasions when I thought they were kind of scouting me up and I pushed the button and my umbrella would come out and it would look a lot like a club. So yeah there were these instances with petty crime.

Also not only the purse snatching but the mafia types were around. Once there was an explosion at a little kiosk not far from the embassy. The word was that they had not paid protection money and had been taken care of. While I was there we did have an attack on the embassy. The RPG (rocket propelled grenade) was fired against the side of the embassy and made a hole about a foot and a half across, something like that in the facade of the embassy building. The round went through and hit a Xerox copying machine on the other side or a safe. Anyway that kind of absorbed the shock so people in the room were not injured. I was talking on the phone at the time and I remember hearing this 'whomp' and I thought this is not ordinary. I quickly wrapped up the phone conversation and then did exactly the wrong thing, went to the window to look out.

Q: Oh yeah. But were you harassed at all by the security people or that...?

RUEDY: No, no I don't recall a single instance where I was harassed by the security people. The omnipresence of security and guards and police and the feeling of being watched that I experienced in East Berlin all over the place I did not have in Russia at the time. Some of the old Soviet types remembered that that was the case always in the old Soviet Union, that you were always watched, that you were always followed, there was always someone there. I just didn't have that feeling.

Q: Did Strobe Talbott play any role in what you were up to?

RUEDY: He did on the very high upper level; he was not somebody who was aware of me or what I was doing or anything like that. But they had established here in Washington a separate, I forget the exact timing of all of that, but the separate office that was responsible directly to the Secretary of State for Russia and the Newly Independent States (NIS) and that functioned de facto as a geographic bureau. I think they were involved early on in the Freedom Support Act in getting money for the kinds of things that we were doing in Russia. So, on the macro level, yeah, we did have one or was it two presidential visits while I was there as well. So it was a good deal of excitement in that regard also. But no I got involved more in that later on, by that time Talbott was deputy secretary. When I came back to Washington after my Moscow assignment, first of all I did a year at the senior seminar at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) which was tremendous and then I went into the rapidly imploding USIA and was involved there in East European and NIS affairs. Then we reorganized the office and split it up getting ready to merge into the State Department. In their structure they had a de facto bureau for NIS affairs which was headed by Steve Sestanovich. This had been opened I think by Strobe Talbott and then Sestanovich inherited it when Talbott went to be deputy secretary.

But in Moscow our programs certainly benefited tremendously from the interest and the funding support that we were getting from the Washington side. That was really emphasizing engagement with Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union at a time when, as I say, USIA was basically imploding. People were doing the best they could and these were sharp, smart, very professional people but they just didn't have the funding to do things with the Fulbright program for example, the international visitors program like we should have been doing in Russia or the American corner or anything else. Basically we were scratching wherever we could and most of that seemed to be from the Freedom Support Act funding which at the time initially came through AID. We had a good relationship there with AID people. I think the relationship that we had with AID and USIS in Moscow was closer, better than the relationship that exists I think in other countries where AID is active and just from anecdotal stories that I've heard from USIS colleagues.

Q: Did you find that your office was playing any sort of a consulting or supporting role for the Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and the various Stans and the Baltic states?

RUEDY: Not really, no. I think these were separate countries, separate independent countries and I think we honored that in the abstract and in the concrete. They had separate embassies and separate PAOs and separate operations that were being supported by the same NGOs and things like that that were supporting us. Ours was a country program and we knew of colleagues working in Ukraine and working in Kazakhstan and the Baltics and the other places but our program was for Russia. We really didn't get into acting as a central control or something like that for programs that were going on in other NIS countries. They reported separately to Washington.

Q: Well, did the fighting in Chechnya play any role in or was it a problem, what was going on?

RUEDY: It was certainly there and festering and we didn't do anything. In fact, we were wanting to do more in the Caucasus but it was too dangerous, too tough. We did have a few exchange participants elsewhere in the region but yeah the fighting was going on. The first Chechnyan war, there was still a OSCU representation in Chechnya that was trying to do some stuff but no that was a difficult period that was just beginning. We didn't in Moscow feel a threat of Chechnyan terrorism or anything like that. It hadn't started, but certainly we were aware of the war and the difficulties that the Russian government was having in Chechnya. At the time I think there was also a feeling that if Chechnya gained autonomy, too much autonomy then there might be other regions of Russia that would be interested in breaking away as well or looking for more autonomy. There was I think concern about whether the center will hold or whether the Russian Federation was subject to further breakup. There was a tentativeness about the Russian Federation generally and the component parts.

Q: Was there anything in the USIA point of view over disputed territories for the Ukraine particularly around Sebastopol and that area?

RUEDY: No, not really. I think there the party line, the official government line was that the two parties just didn't work, didn't agree, but it didn't as I recall produce any tension or impact on politics, flurries of back papers and official texts and stuff like that for information section, press section, it just didn't.

Q: You didn't find yourself with any program that sort of inadvertently finds itself in the middle of any dispute or anything?

RUEDY: No, I don't recall that, I don't recall any problem like that.

Q: Well then after, gee whiz I think it was a very interesting time for you.

RUEDY: It was and in retrospect I'm almost sorry that we didn't try to stay for a third year. One had to declare pretty early on in the two years to extend for a third year. It seemed to fit with our children's school schedule as well because our daughter graduated from high school at the Anglo-American school in Moscow and she was off to college when we came back to the States. Our son who is three years younger we felt he would be able to do three years in an American high school in Fairfax County so it would be logical for their schooling to break in two years rather than for a third year.

Q: Well then you came back and went to the senior seminar for a year?

RUEDY: That is correct.

Q: How did you find that?

RUEDY: It was a tremendously enriching year and the focus was on the United States. We spent probably at least a week, ten days of every month, on the road. We spent time in Army bases, Navy installations, Camp Pendleton and Air Force bases, the Mississippi delta and farms in Indiana and Chicago and New York and it was just a tremendously enriching year. Lots of conversations with lots and lots of different people. It was just good training. The senior seminar has since been abolished and I'm sorry to hear that because I found it tremendously enriching. I think it is pretty cost intensive too I suppose to afford to send somebody to a full year of training like that in terms of what you get out of it afterwards.

Q: What you did get out of it is a feel for the country. Its not just because we are overseas operating but I think a government worker who spends all his or her time in Washington develops an inside the beltway mentality and doesn't really get a feel for what the country.

RUEDY: Absolutely. I think for us too it was sort of a matter of outreach also. I think we were doing some good in talking to state officials, city officials and stuff like that because overall I think we were a pretty impressive group. No personal credit here but we were a bunch of sharp people in that group of 35. I think meeting with media officials at CNN or various speakers that we had here at FSI or whatever, they would, I think, come away impressed with the conversations. David Broder from the Washington Post sort of split up the stuff and called people and so on. They called up Broder and asked him if he would be interested in coming to speak with the senior seminar and Broder said, "Yes, of course, he would like to do that." In fact I think he tried to make a point of doing that when he got an invitation to State and he was really terrific.

Q: Well then, then where did you go?

RUEDY: I went from there to a rapidly imploding USIA. I was assigned first as a policy officer. It was hard getting a position as there weren't very many openings and my specialty area obviously was European and NIS affairs. So, I went as policy officer, third position in the office of East Europe and the Newly Independent States. There I worked for a couple of people who I had worked for over the years - Bob McCarthy who was the office director and Paul Smith who had been the PAO in Moscow when I was there, deputy office director, so I was working for the two of them. Bob McCarthy was another guy who really knows the Balkans and Serbo-Croatian and absolutely fluent Russian. They were good guys to work with, good people.

Q: You were there from 1998 to...?

RUEDY: When was consolidation? I think consolidation was '99? Anyway the big policy issue that was going on was the Balkan war. We were responsible for East Europe and the Balkans as well as the countries of the former Soviet Union. So, we were working on public affairs issues supporting our PAOs and our people in the field in Macedonia and in Belgrade.

Q: Kosovo.

RUEDY: Kosovo was going down and I remember our PAO a really sharp guy in Macedonia was traveling around with Chris Hill and was really trying to do something in Kosovo before the bombing started. Philip Reeker was his name. Later on he became the deputy spokesman at the State Department under Boucher and is out in Budapest now as the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission); he is a really sharp officer.

But anyway we were just working with them and providing policy support. We had a small office actually in Pristina and a kind of a reading room, library and for a while before the situation really went down the tubes we were trying to expand that. It was to become a little platform for U.S. diplomatic presence in Pristina so we would have more people on the ground there. I remember working with the State Department to try to make that happen. Of course, it all got overtaken by events but they were going to establish a consular presence in Pristina.

Q: What was the feeling towards that whole Kosovo situation? I mean within your range there, was it sort of getting nastier and nastier? Was it your feeling that it was going to kind of blow up and you would have to do something?

RUEDY: Nobody quite knew what direction it was going to take. The feeling was that Serbia was just taking it too far and what was going on in Kosovo could not be allowed to stand. So we had the bombing campaign and all the rest of it. I frankly was surprised when the bombing campaign was successful and I thought that it was going to require some kind of ground presence or something else had to happen. But finally it worked and a settlement came out of it. The flurry of activity of just providing policy texts and the back and forth and the normal ebb and flow of working with the post and thinking yeah we obviously had to evacuate the PAO from Belgrade and I think they went overland up into Hungary. There was lots and lots going on.

Q: You did that until when?

RUEDY: Then the USIA consolidation became our big issue and I was involved in that stuff until I retired. I would have to look at the time table now to find out exactly when the legislation went through that USIA would be consolidated into the State Department and could no longer be a separate, independent agency. The whole political history of that is pretty turgid, I mean all kinds of justifications after the fact were made as to why this would be a good idea, but there was also I think a good deal of political deal making between Madelyn Albright and Jesse Helms. USIA's leadership was very, very weak and I think Joe Duffy didn't see that as a bad thing. They definitely didn't fight it.

Q: Joe Duffy, I mean people say either he wasn't effective or really didn't like the job.

RUEDY: He wasn't interested, he didn't travel very much and he just wasn't engaged very much. He just wasn't engaged very much in doing what a USIA director needs to do. He wasn't really leading the agency.

Q: He was a friend of Bill Clinton's I guess.

RUEDY: I think so and especially his wife was a high-level Washington lobbyist type. There was great hope in USIA when he was named because here he was an academic and he would be somebody who understood exchange, international education and stuff like that, but he just didn't amount to much. We were savaged I think, not on the Hill so much. I think there were people on the Hill that liked USIA that wished there was more robust leadership in USIA. I remember reading a transcript of Duffy's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations committee and Joe Biden really savaging him; Biden was a Democrat and did wish us well. He got lots of help from people like Biden, Bradley and many, many others and more money generally, modestly more money than the administration or Duffy was willing to ask for. I think there was some deal making that had to do with a lot of people on chemical weapons, treaties or whatever. Of course, Jesse Helms was out to get AID and I think the knives were really out for AID. AID did have strong leadership and I think we were kind of collateral damage.

Q: A designated whipping boy.

RUEDY: Exactly, exactly. We were pretty low on the shelf in terms of Washington priorities, Washington budgets or whatever not really very prominent so we got consolidated.

Q: But one of the things that has struck me as I've done these interviews now for close to twenty years has been the importance of the USIA function overseas. In talking to people of their experiences in many ways it is a richer experience than a significant number of the regular Foreign Service officers, more getting out, more of an administrative experience and all of that. Sometimes I think exchange programs are probably one of the principal ways to further American interests in the field. I think our foreign policy needs their programs a lot which unfortunately is not happening as much. When a USIS officer returned to Washington they ended up as sort of a minor figure, juggling, you know, not really having much to do with anything outside of administering money and people. I mean there wasn't much policy impact from them back in Washington.

REUDY: I think generally that is true, I wouldn't disagree with that. The emphasis was on the field and everybody, sort of the mantra in USIA, knew that the key stuff was happening out at the posts and the way you got promoted was doing things overseas. I think in general USIA officers probably spent more of their career overseas than many State Department officers did.

In Washington, well when I was German desk officer, for example, I would try to keep in close contact with my colleagues at State, EUR/CE, and get over to their staff meetings and be in contact with them for one thing or another. But certainly we weren't involved in "policy" whatever that means. We were involved in supporting our programs on the ground that were taking place overseas. So yeah the focus was much more on what was happening abroad. There was much discussion about not having a domestic constituency.

There was also the Smith-Mundt prohibition in law that prohibited USIA from distributing its material within the United States. So we were definitely outward focused. In working overseas I always felt that my work was as rewarding or more rewarding than the work of embassy colleagues at comparable levels. I felt that I was just as much a political officer, as tuned into the political stuff as my colleagues in the political section were, maybe not tuned into the economic stuff as much as the econ people were but working closely with them and working closely with other embassy sections. I always felt that as a junior officer that it was more of a managerial level whatever that is but in USIS we didn't get to work very, very closely with embassy colleagues.

Some USIS people had opposite views and would get off into the cultural centers and left off from the embassy figuring the less they saw the ambassador or DCM the better off they were. I can sympathize with that, but not much frankly; I think when that happened we weren't as effective as we could have been.

Q: Well then you retired when?

RUEDY: I retired in 2001. My last job was a challenge. I think in retrospect we did all right with it but we need to reorganize our office. We were East Europe and NIS affairs so we needed to split our office into an East European section which got melded in to the West European section which joined EUR at the Department of State. I became office director for public diplomacy for the NIS. We then were melded into NIS affairs at the State Department. At the time it was rather a hot structure rather than a de facto geographical bureau functioning as a de facto geographical bureau under Steve Sestanovich. But, Sestanovich had the title of special advisor to the secretary for the former Soviet Union, etc. So anyway I and a group of three desk officers, a desk officer for Russia, a desk officer for Central Asia and a desk officer for the Caucasus came over to the State Department. We worked in a new office, found office space, figured out a way to go with EUR/EX and all that stuff and then moved on over to the State Department.

Overall I think it worked. It was difficult for people to kind of wrap their minds around the idea that USIA was history and we were being merged into the State Department but here we were in big Foggy Bottom and do it their way and do it according to their rules, according to their procedure and there was no point in saying, "Ah, but we did it better over at USIA."

Q: I mean what hasn't, I don't know, I have a gut feeling that by cutting up an agency you have hurt a very productive career path and people who would act for the embassy but since policy wise as opposed to allowing the public diplomacy people to come up on the backs of them, I don't know.

RUEDY: I think that's true. I think there are some real problems with the organizational structure now. Organizational charts don't tell you very much a lot of times but if you look at public diplomacy in the State Department organizational chart you see some interesting anomalies. The public affairs officers out in the field report to their ambassadors and the DCMs. The public diplomacy office in the geographic bureau is an office which reports in turn to a deputy assistant secretary, who reports to an assistant secretary for geographic affairs who reports to the undersecretary for political affairs who reports in turn to the deputy secretary of state. On the public diplomacy side the information bureau and the bureau of educational cultural affairs in turn report on up the line to the undersecretary for public diplomacy who in turn reports to the deputy secretary of state. So the two lines, the educational/cultural affairs, the information program line doesn't come together but the public diplomacy field operation line until you get up to the deputy secretary of state level and what kind of stovepipe is that. So anyway Karen Hughes will have an interesting job before her.

Q: She's the designate to take over.

RUEDY: That's correct.

Q: Really the whole thing hasn't really been settled yet, I think.

RUEDY: No and there's been revolving leadership in the public diplomacy undersecretariat. They've had some sharp people. Ellen Lieberman was the first undersecretary for public diplomacy and she was certainly bright and energetic and had good intentions but you know the administration faded out. Charlotte Beers, the ad executive, from Madison Avenue was named by Colin Powell and that was sort of an inspired choice I suppose. But she really didn't, I don't think, she had trouble getting her arms around the whole bureaucratic structure and how to do things and how you make things happen, it must have been very frustrating for her. She didn't last all that long in the job so we haven't really had leadership.

It's been an issue in public diplomacy. Even at USIA I think we had some people who were politically well connected and that helped a lot, people like Wick but you didn't have any director of USIA who was on the one hand good administrators, steward of the agency, a leader of the agency and at the same time somebody that had some clout and wisdom in the NSC and with the secretary of state and policy circles in Washington, so that was always difficult. We needed a friend of the president or something like that. Henry Catto was really good, he had been ambassador in London. Bush I brought him back to sort out things in USIA after things got kind of messy. Catto took hold, but he was in for only about a year. Other than that, no, the leadership was kind of weak. It was a problem for USIA through the years.

Q: And they were facing a lengthy problem. Today the prestige of the United States has been hurt very badly.

RUEDY: Well the Declaration of Independence says something about a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, laying out a rationale for basic American policy stuff including declaring ourselves independent and there is a long tradition of that. I think we need to put our point across honestly and forcefully. Some people are going to agree and a lot of people are going to disagree but you put it across. Then I think bringing to bear the American society just sort of the dynamism and I think the basic good will and decency of the American public I think in finding a way to project that is important. The character of American society is our most important public diplomacy asset.

I remember in East Berlin talking to a few people. They were difficult to get to, but the GDR would bring in students and others from third world countries especially and provide them with first class education and they were supposed to go out and be good Marxists and be the vanguard. But these people generally didn't like East Germany all that much and found it a pretty dreadful, repressive place and they were fighting an uphill battle. Then I remember exchangeers coming to the United States having almost always an overwhelmingly positive experience and spending time here whether its two years getting a masters degree or whether its three weeks on some kind of an international visitors program going back with a great respect. Of course, when you talk to them, eh, I think they would even tell you the bad news in some cases. But when you talk to them they were just really enthusiastic and glowing about the experiences that they had and the people that they had talked to and diversity of opinion and the dynamism of the country and the activity that was going on here. Some of it they would agree with and some of it they would reject. They would say, "Well I'm too European, I'm too German to go along with this, that or the other", but they would have just a tremendous admiration for it. I talked earlier about the Pershing II debate and the peace party when I was in Germany and I think how big an asset in bringing about that very important step wasn't so much intellectually convincing arguments as to why Pershing II got to be stationed in Germany as opposed to the SS20s and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and argue this point all day long. But I think it was basically a feeling that the Americans for all of the back and forth sometimes and the confusion and stuff like that we are just a country that was worth sticking with, that was worth supporting. They felt a commonality, they felt a set of deeply shared values and a friendship, a friendship they felt was worth it and commitment of overcoming whatever the immediate policy issues were. Having a friendship; not with this administration necessarily or an acceptance of this policy but a relationship with this great country. As I say when you bring the dynamism of the American public into the foreign policy process and I think we do that with exchanges, it just works almost every time.

Q: All right, well I think this is a good place to say "Auf Wiedersehen" (German for good bye). "Dobre Diem" (Russian for Good day).

RUEDY: Thank you very much it's been an interesting exercise for me. It was a great career, I'm glad I chose it.

End of interview